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COMMENTARY ON
HEBREWS

CHAPTER 11

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A CLOUD OF HEAVENLY WITNESSES LEADING TO THE
HEAVENLY CANAAN OR A COMMENTARY UPON THE
ELEVENTH CHAPTER OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

BY WILLIAM PERKINS

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1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out,

not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1.

Concerning faith, two points are necessary to be known of every Christian: the doctrine and the practice of it. The whole doctrine of faith (being grounded and gathered out of the Word of God) is comprised in the Creed, commonly called the Apostles’ Creed, which being already by us expounded, it followeth in order (next after the doctrine) to lay down also the practice of faith: for which purpose we have chosen this eleventh chapter to the Hebrews as being a portion of scripture wherein the said practice of faith is most excellently and at large set down.

This chapter depends on the former thus: We may read in the former chapter that many Jews, having received the faith and given their names to Christ, did afterward fall away; therefore towards the end of the chapter there is added a notable exhortation tending to persuade the Hebrews to persevere in faith unto the end, as also to suffer patiently whatever shall befall them in the profession of it. And to urge the exhortation, there are divers reasons, not needful to be alleged, for they concern not the present purpose.

Now, in this chapter, he continues the same exhortation; and the whole chapter (as I take it) is nothing else in substance but one reason to urge the former exhortation to perseverance in faith; and the reason is drawn from the excellency of faith: for this chapter doth divers ways set down what an excellent gift of God faith is. His whole scope therefore is manifest to be nothing else but to urge them to persevere and continue in that faith, proved at large to be so excellent a thing; and indeed he could not bring a better argument to

move them to love and hold fast their faith, than by persuading them of the excellency of it. For common reason bids us not only choose, but hold fast that that is excellent.

Out of this coherence, we may learn, in a word, that perseverance in faith is a matter not of ordinary necessity, nor of mean excellency, to the urging whereof the author of this epistle useth so large and so forcible an exhortation insomuch as, whereas ordinary exhortations occupy the room of one or some few verses, this is continued through divers chapters.

The parts of this whole chapter are two:

1. A general description of faith, vv. 1-4.
2. An illustration or declaration of that description, by a large rehearsal of manifold examples of ancient and worthy men in the Old Testament, vv. 4 to the end.

Of these two in order:

The description of faith consists of three actions or effects of faith, set down in three several verses:

The first effect in the first verse. Faith makes things which are not (but only are hoped for) after a sort to subsist and to be present with the believer.

The second is in the second verse. Faith makes a believer approved of God.

The third in the third verse. Faith makes a man understand and believe things incredible to sense and reason.

Of these in order.

Now faith is the ground of things which are hoped for: and the evidence of things which are not seen.

This first verse contains the first effect in the description of faith, wherein first let us see the true meaning of the words; secondly, what instructions they do naturally yield unto us.

I. For the meaning, we must examine the words severally.

Now faith.

Faith in the Word of God is specially of three sorts: Historical, miraculous, and justifying or saving faith.

1. Historical faith is not only a knowledge of the Word, but an assent of the heart to the truth of it; and this faith is general not only to all men, good and bad, but even to the devils themselves, James 2:19, Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well: the devils also believe it, and tremble. Now he that will believe out of the scripture there is one God, he will believe historically anything in the scripture.

2. Miraculous, or the faith of miracles, which is an inward persuasion of the heart, wrought by some special instinct of the Holy Ghost in some man, whereby he is truly persuaded that God will use him as his instrument for the working of some miracles: this also is general, both to elect and reprobate. Judas had it with the rest of the Apostles.

3. Saving (commonly called justifying) faith, which is special persuasion wrought by the Holy Ghost in the heart of those that are effectually called, concerning their reconciliation and salvation by Christ.

Of these three sorts of faith, the third is principally meant in this place. And although in the description, and over all the chapter, there are some things that agree to other faith than it, yet I say the general scope in this chapter is principally of that faith that saves a man. It becomes us therefore to learn carefully the instructions that concern the practice of this faith, for it is no less than saving faith.

Secondly, it is said that this faith is the ground, or substance, for the Word signifies both.

The meaning is that things hoped for, as yet are not, and so have no being nor substance. Now faith that believes the promises and applieth them; that faith gives to those things which yet are not (after a sort) a substance or subsistence in the heart of the believer; so that that thing which never had, nor yet hath a being in itself, by this faith hath a being in the heart of the believer; this I take to be the true meaning.

Thirdly, it followeth of what things this faith is the ground or substance, namely, of things hoped for, or, and things not seen. And these be of two sorts: either in regard of the fathers of the Old Testament alone, or of them and us both.

Of the first sort were these two: 1. The incarnation of Christ. 2. The publishing of the gospel, both to Jew and Gentile in a glorious manner: both these were hoped for of them, but we have seen them. To them they had a being only in faith, to us a being in themselves.

Now unto the fathers of the Old Testament, their faith gave these two things a being in their hearts and souls, though they came not to pass many hundred years after.

There are other things which we hope for as well as they, which are to come, and not seen in respect of us both; and they be six:

1. Justification, standing in the remission of sins.
2. Sanctification in this life.
3. The perfection and accomplishment of our sanctification after this life.
4. The Resurrection of the body, and reuniting it with the soul.
5. Glorification of body and soul.
6. Life everlasting, and glory with God in heaven.

These they saw not with the eye of the body, neither do we; yet they hoped for them, and so do we. They had no being in themselves to them, neither have they as yet to us; but this true saving faith gave to them, gives to us, and will give to every believer, whilst the world lasteth, such a certain assurance of them that they seem present unto us, and we seem presently to enjoy them. We cannot enjoy any of them fully, but saving faith hath this power to give them all a present being in our hearts, and us such a real possession of them as greatly delighteth a Christian soul, insomuch as the feeling of the sweetness of this glory, though it be to come, overwhelmeth the feeling of a worldly misery, though it be present.

Fourthly, it is added, And the evidence.

This word signifieth and teacheth us two things concerning faith:

1. Faith is an evidence, that is, faith so convinces the mind, understanding and judgment as that is cannot but must needs, yea, it

compelleth it by force of reasons unanswerable, to believe the promises of God certainly.

2. It is an evidence, that is, whereas life everlasting and all other things hoped for are invisible, and were never seen of any believer since the world began, this saving faith hath this power and property: to take that thing in itself invisible and never yet seen, and so lively to represent it to the heart of the believer, and to the eye of his mind, as that after a sort he presently seeth and enjoyeth that invisible thing and rejoiceth in that sight and enjoying of it; and so the judgment is not only convinced that such a thing shall come to pass, though it be yet to come, but the mind (as far as God's Word hath revealed, and is able) conceives of that thing as being really present to the view of it.

Let one example serve for all: Life everlasting is a thing hoped for. Now faith, not only by infallible arguments grounded upon the Word and promise of God, convinceth a man's judgment that it shall come to pass (insomuch as he dare say that he knoweth certainly there is life everlasting as that he liveth and moveth), but this faith also (as much as God's Word hath revealed, and as far forth as the mind of man is able to conceive of it) so representeth this life everlasting to the eye of the soul as that the soul doth seem to apprehend and enjoy this life everlasting; yea, and often in such measure as that he condemneth the world, and all the present felicity of it, in comparison of that measure of the joys thereof, which faith representeth to his soul; and thus faith makes that present which is absent, and makes that manifest and visible which in itself is invisible – invisible to the eyes of the body, it makes visible to the eye of the soul; the sight of which eye is both given and continued, and daily sharpened by saving faith. And thus faith is a most excellent evidence of things not seen. So then, the whole sum of this first effect

is briefly thus much: whereas things to be believed, as perfection of sanctification, resurrection, glorification etc. are not yet seen, neither can be, in that they are not yet come to pass; yet if a man have grace certainly to believe the promises of God, these things shall have a being to his soul, in that both his judgment knoweth assuredly they shall come to pass, and his soul in most lively and joyful representations seemeth to enjoy them.

Hitherto the meaning of the first effect.

II. Now in the second place, let us see what instructions this first effect thus unfolded doth minister to us.

First, whereas faith gives a substance and being to things that are not, we learn that the fathers in the Old Testament that lived before the incarnation of Christ, were truly partakers of the body and blood of Christ.

If any allege that this is strange, considering that Christ had then no body and blood, neither had He any until the Incarnation; and how then could they receive that which then was not?

I grant it is true that they then had no being, and yet the father received them. But how can this be? I answer, by the wonderful power of saving faith, which makes things that are not in nature, to have in some sort a being and subsistence: and so was Christ (though He was to come) present to the believers of the old time. For, Rev. 13:8, Christ is a lamb slain from the beginning of the world: that is, slain as well then as now: and that not only in the counsel and decree of God whereby He is born and slain in all times and places; not only in regard of the eternal power, efficacy an merit of His death; but also even in respect of the heart of the believer, whose faith makes

that that is locally absent, after a sort truly and really present; even so also is Christ a Lamb slain from the beginning of the world.

See a plain demonstration hereof in John 8:56, Abraham saw me (saith Christ) and rejoiced. How could this be, when as Christ was not born of a thousand years after? Answer: This could not be in reason, but it was indeed to Abraham's faith whereby he saw Christ more lively and more to his joy and consolation so many hundred years after he was than many that lived in Christ's time, and saw Him, and heard Him, and conversed with Him; for they living with Him, yet were as good as absent from Him because they believed not in Him. And Abraham, though Christ was so far from him, yet by his faith was present with him. Again, 1 Cor. 10:3, the ancient, believing Israelites ate the same spiritual bread, and drank the same spiritual rock, and that rock was Christ. How could they eat and drink Christ so long before He was? I answer, they did it by reason of that wonderful power of faith, which makes a thing absent present to the believer. By that faith they received Christ, as lively, as effectually, as much to their profit and comfort, as we do since His coming.

If any man ask, how could their faith apprehend that that then was not? I answer, by giving them interest and title to it; and so the fathers are said by faith to have received Christ because their faith gave them right and title in Christ, and in their hearts they felt the efficacy of His death and resurrection, whereby they died to sin and were renewed in holiness, as well as we are now by the same efficacy.

Secondly, whereas faith makes things absent present:

Here they are confuted that teach that the Lord's Supper is no Sacrament unless the bread and wine be either truly turned into the body and blood of Christ, or at least be they be in or about the bread; and that so he is locally present and must locally and substantially be

received; and this (say they) is the most comfortable receiving of Christ; for what comfort is it to receive one absent? But these men know not this notable prerogative of true faith: Faith gives being to things which are not, and makes things present which are absent; they therefore that will have Christ locally present, they take this noble prerogative from faith, for here is nothing absent which faith should make present; we need not go in this Sacrament to require a corporal presence: it is sufficient if we have true faith; for that makes Him present much more comfortably than it might be his bodily presence would be unto us.

If any man ask, How can this be? I answer, The faith of the receiver knoweth best; and yet reason can say something in this case: for suppose a man look earnestly upon a star; there are many thousand miles betwixt his eye and the star, yet the star and his eye are so united together as that the star is after a sort present to his eye. So if we regard local distance, we are as far from Christ as earth is from heaven; but if we regard the nature of faith which is to reach itself to Christ, wherever He be, in that regard Christ is present: and why should not this be so? For if the bodily eye, so feeble and weak, can reach so far as to a star, and join it to itself, and so make it present; why should not much more the piercing eye of the soul reach up to Christ, and make Him present to the comfortable feeling of itself?

Thirdly, here we learn how to behave ourselves in a strange temptation whereby God useth to exercise His children. The Lord, after that He hath received His children into His favour, continueth not always to manifest that favour unto them, but oftentimes puts back the feeling of it for a time, then afterward, He may shew it again in more comfortable manner unto them, and that they may afterward more sensibly feel it, and more earnestly love it, and more carefully labour to keep it, when they have it.

Now for the time of this eclipse of the favour of God, He not only darkeneth His love, but makes them also feel such a measure of His wrath as that they will often think themselves castaways from the favour of God. David and Job were often exercised with this temptation, as appeareth by their most lamentable and bitter complaints; yea, David doubts not (Psa. 77:9) to challenge the Lord that He hath forgotten to be gracious, and hath shut up His lovingkindness in displeasure. And Job (Job 15:26) complains to the Lord that He writeth bitter things against him, and makes him to possess the sins of his youth; words, as it may seem, of men forsaken of God; and indeed so for that time they thought of themselves. If it please the Lord thus to deal with us, so as we feel nothing else but His wrath wrestling with our consciences, neither can think otherwise by present feeling, but that God hath forsaken us; what should we do in this pitiful case? Should we despair, as reason would bid us? No, but take this course: Call to mind God's merciful promises, and His ancient former love; and cast thyself upon that love, though thou canst not feel it. When thou hast most cause to despair, then labour against it. When thou hast no reason to believe, then believe with all thy power. For remember the power and prerogative of thy faith: it believes not things that are, and manifestly appear, so much as such things that are not, and have no being. So then, when God's favour seems to be lost, and have no being to thee, then God's favour is a fit object for thy faith, which believes these things that are not. Let all the devils in hell set themselves against thy poor soul, and if thou holdest fast this faith, they cannot all make thee sink under it: for when the devil saith, "Thou hast lost God's favour"; by faith a man answereth, "Though God's favour be lost unto my feeling, yet to my faith it is not: my faith gives it a being, and so long (say what thou wilt) I will never fear that it is lost." When God pulls back His favour, and fights against thee with His wrath, do as Jacob did (Gen. 32:27,29), wrestle with God, though thou have but

one leg; that is, though thou have but one little spark of faith, fight with that little faith, lay hold by it on God, and let Him not go until He hath blessed thee, in turning again unto thee His favourable countenance; and say with Job (Job 13), even in the very heat of thy temptation, O Lord, though thou kill this body and flesh of mine, yet will I trust in thee for everlasting life: yea, and though God's anger should seem to increase, yet for all that take faster hold and faint not; for faith will never fail thee: it will restore God's love when it seems lost; it will set it before thine eyes when it seems to be hid. For mark well but this one reason: if faith will give life everlasting a being, and make it present to thy soul, which indeed never had being to thee; how much more can it give a being to God's favour and make it present to thy soul, which once had, and indeed hath still a being, and was never lost indeed, but only to a man's feeling? Thus, true faith is able to answer this temptation, whether it comes in life or in the pangs of death.

Fourthly, whereas faith is called an evidence, hence we learn that the nature of faith stands not in doubting, but in certainty and assurance. The Romish doubting of the essence of faith is as contrary to true faith as darkness to light: for faith is an evidence of things hoped for, that is, it convinceth the judgment by infallible arguments; knowing as certainly the truth of the promises and for the things hoped for, as that God is God. But Rome will needs join faith and doubting, which indeed fight like fire and water, and can never agree together in every respect, but one will in the end destroy the other.

Objection. But it seemeth doubting is a part or at least a companion of faith, for we doubt as well as believe; and who is so faithful as doubteth not? Answer. We do so, but what then? We should not, for God commands us to believe and not to doubt; therefore to believe,

because it is commanded of God, is a virtue; and if it be a virtue, then to doubt is a vice; faith and doubting are both in a good man, but faith is a work of grace and of the Spirit; doubting is a work of the flesh, and a piece of the corruption of the old man.

Fifthly, if faith be a substance of things hoped for, much more is it a substance to the believer: if it gives those things a being which are out of him, much more doth it give a permanent being unto the believer himself, strengthening him to stand and continue in all assaults. So Heb. 7:14 – faith is that whereby a believer is sustained and upheld, so that indeed we may fitly say, Faith is the spiritual substance and the spiritual strength of a Christian man, and according to the measure of his faith, such is the measure of his spiritual strength.

This consideration hath divers comfortable uses, but especially two:
1. When any of us are out of the reach of a temptation, so long are we confident of our own strength: but when we are assaulted by the devil, the world and our own flesh, then we shall find that to resist is an harder matter than we dreamed of; for, as possible as it is for water to burn, or fire to put out itself, so possible is it for us of ourselves to resist sin, insomuch as it is a thousand to one, but that at every assault our nature yields. Now if it be so hard to rule over one sin, how shall we do against that sea of temptations that overwhelm a Christian life? This doctrine teacheth thee how, namely, to stick to thy faith, and it will do for thee: for if it be the substance of things thou hopest for, which yet never were; much more will it yield unto thee spiritual strength and substance to make thee stand in all temptations. When thou art tempted, then call to mind God's promises, believe them, that is, apply them to thyself, and be resolved that they were made, and shall be performed even to thee: then though thou have no more power of thyself than fire hath to

cease to burn, yet, whilst thou doest thus, thou shalt feel thy soul spiritually strengthened against all temptations: and feeling the experience of this, deny them thine own strength, and magnify the power that God hath given unto true faith.

Again, though now we are most of us quiet, under our own vines and fig-trees, yet we know not how soon the hand of the Lord may be upon any of us, in poverty, sickness, imprisonment, banishment, losses, famine, or how it pleaseth Him; how shall a poor Christian stand and buckle himself to bear these? I answer, true saving faith, resting on the Word of God, and believing the promises, not formally, but truly, will put such substantial spiritual strength into him, as that at first, though he bow under it, yet shall he be able to recover himself again and buckle himself to go forwarding his profession, and shall follow Christ manfully with this his cross. This wonderful power hath God given to saving faith, both to resist temptations and to undergo all crosses.

And thus much of the first action, or effect, of faith.

“For by it the elders obtained a good report.” Hebrews 11:2

This verse containeth the second effect of saving faith: which is, that faith is a means whereby a believer is approved of God.

This verse hath special relation to the fifth verse, for that that is said here of all the elders in general, is there affirmed specially of Enoch; namely, that he was reported as to have pleased God.

Let us first search the true meaning of the words.

Elders.

That is, all such men as living under the Old Testament, believed in Christ; amongst which (though all be understood) yet some were more excellent in faith and obedience than others, and so more honourable and of higher estimation with God and men; and of them it is specially to be understood.

Now concerning these elders, it is further said that they were well reported of. Hereby are meant three things:

1. That God approved and allowed of them.
2. That God did approve of them because of their faith in the Messiah.
3. That God gave a testimony, and declared that He approved of them.

I. For the first, it may be asked, How were they approved of God? Answer: Christ the Son of God is He in whom the Father is well

pleased. Now they believing in Christ, their sins were laid on Him, and made His by imputation: and contrariwise, His holiness, obedience and satisfaction were imputed to them, and by the same imputation were made theirs. Now, that being theirs, God being so well pleased with Christ, could not but also for Christ's sake approve of them. If this seem hard unto any, I make it plain by this comparison: Look as Jacob, a younger brother, puts on Esau's garment, the elder brother, and in it was taken for Esau, and obtained his father's blessing and patrimony, which by himself he could not have got; even so we are as younger brethren, Christ is our elder brother; we have no right nor title to our father's blessing, nor to the kingdom of heaven. We must put on the robe of perfect righteousness, which is the garment of Christ our elder brother. We, standing clothed with it, purchase our Father's favour, and with His favour His blessing, and His blessing is the right and title to everlasting life. And thus by Christ they were approved.

II. Secondly, for what were they approved? The text saith: By faith; not because faith is an action of a sanctified mind and a good grace of God; for so are humility, love, fear of God (all which are graces of the sanctifying spirit, as faith is); but because it is a worthy instrument in the heart of the believer which apprehends and applieth to the soul that righteousness of Christ by which he is justified; thus it being the hand and instrument of their justification, by it (it is said) they were approved.

III. Thirdly. The text addeth, that God did not only approve of them, but that He testified and made it manifest to all the world that He did so. And this testimony God gave them 1. In His Word, and 2. In their own consciences.

1. The truth of the first is manifest in that not only in this chapter, but often also in the Old Testament, God hath made such honourable mention, and given such honourable titles unto many of these elders, calling Abraham the friend of God (2 Chr. 20:7), and David a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), and them all His anointed and dear chosen children (Psa. 105:15). Thus God hath testified of them in His Word. 2. Secondly, God testifieth it to their own consciences in that He gave them His Spirit, inwardly to assure their consciences that He did accept them in the Messiah to come; and thus these elders received a testimony, both outward to all the world, and inward in their conscience, that God in Christ approved and loved them: to the sense is plain, the use hereof manifold.

I. In that it is said these elders were approved by faith. Here we learn what is the old and ancient way, the right and straight way (that hath no by-ways) to life everlasting: namely, this only, To rely only on the mercy of God in Christ for pardon of sin; this is the way wherein all the ancient elders walked to heaven; this is the way that God hath opened and made unto His court: it is the King's highway, the beaten way, common to everyone that knows how to walk in it; and deceived none that ever went in it; and beside which there is no other. Seeing, then, God hath consecrated, and our elders have trod this way before us, let us follow them; that so we may attain the kingdom whereto it hath brought them.

Many doubt whether this be the way or no. The Spirit of God puts it out of doubt (Isa. 30:21), first affirming peremptorily, This is the way; secondly, bidding us therefore, walk in the same. This is the way, walk in it. Our elders obeyed this commandment of the Spirit; and, walking in this way, found the end of it – everlasting life. If we would attain the same end of the journey, we must walk the same way.

But the world will say, This is a needless exhortation, for we walk this way, we deny ourselves and look to be approved of God only by Christ; but it is strange to see how men deceive themselves. Can a man walk in a way and not leave marks and steps behind him; even so, he that walks in this way, follow him and you shall see the steps of his continual dying unto sin, and living unto holiness, insomuch that a man that followeth him and marketh the course of his life in this way, may evidently say, See where he hath cast off and left behind him this and that sin; see where he hath taken up and carried with him these and those virtues and graces of God. Mark, here is a print of his faith, here is a print of his hope, here are prints of his love. And, may a child of God be followed and traced all the way to heaven, even until he come to his death, which is the gate of heaven? How mightily then are they deceived, which think they have walked all their lives in this way, and yet there is not one step to be seen; for assuredly this way is so beaten and trodden, that no man ever trod in it since the world began, but he left behind him manifest and visible steps, that all men that would look at him might see that he had gone that way. As therefore we all desire to come to heaven, and as we profess we walk in the way thither; so let us be as careful to leave behind us our steps; namely, tokens and prints of our faith, our hope and love; which if we do, then mark the excellent use of those steps.

1. They testify unto all that see them that we walked the right way to heaven; and secondly, they will serve for marks and directions for them that shall walk in the same way after us. By the first we shall leave an honourable testimony of ourselves behind us; by the second, we shall move others to magnify God's name, to whom our steps have been marks and directions, helps and furtherances in the way to heaven.

II. Secondly, for what were these elders approved? For their faith: for nothing else. Amongst these elders Samson was wonderful in

strength, Solomon in wisdom, Joshua in courage, Moses in learning; many of them in the honour and pomp of the world, in beauty, riches and other external gifts, and the most of them all in long life; yet not for one or all of these are any of them said to be regarded of God; but it is plainly said that for their faith God did approve them. Hear then learn what is the thing amongst all things that must make us acceptable unto God, even this, To deny ourselves and to rest upon the mercy of God in Christ; this will do it and nothing else. Hast thou strength? So had Goliath as well as Samson. Hast thou beauty? So had Absalom as well or more than David. Hast thou wisdom? So had Ahithophel, though not like Solomon, yet above ordinary men. Hast thou riches? Esau was richer than Jacob. Hast thou lived long? So did Cain and Ishmael, as well as Isaac. Hast thou many children? So had Ahab as well as Gideon. Hast thou learning (the glory of nature)? So had the Egyptians as well as Moses, for there Moses learned it. All these thou mayest have, and yet be a vile person in the sight of God; so far from being approved of God, as that He will not vouchsafe (unless it be in His anger) once to regard or look at thee. Hast thou therefore any of those outward gifts? It is not to be contemned, it hath his use; thank God for it and use it well; and use it so as by it thou may be approved amongst men; but stand not to it before God, for though it be wisdom, or learning, or never so excellent a gift, it cannot purchase the favour and acceptation of God; but true faith is able to please God both in this life and especially at the Day of Judgment.

This doctrine: 1. first confuteth the error of some gross papists, who hold and write that many philosophers, for their good use of the light of nature, for their deepness in learning and for their civil lives, are now Saints in heaven; a most manifest and shameful untruth, and here as manifestly confuted, for was Solomon not accepted for all his wisdom, and shall Socrates? Was Moses not accepted for all his

learning, how then should Aristotle ? If faith made all of them accepted, and nothing but faith, how is it possible they should be accepted which never heard of faith? Nay, I say more. If many a man which liveth in the church, as deep (it may be) in human learning as they, and of great knowledge also in the whole doctrine of religion (which they never knew) and yet could not, nor ever shall be accepted of God, only for want of this saving faith, how absurd it is to imagine salvation for them, which neither had spark of faith, nor knowledge of Christ? Let us then hold that as there is no name whereby to be saved but only the name of Christ; so no means to be saved by that Christ, but only faith, even that faith for which these elders were accepted of God.

2. Secondly, this excellency of faith above all other gifts, shews the vanity of the world; so careful and earnest in seeking honour, riches, credit, wisdom, learning (all which can but make them esteemed and approved to the world), and so careless and negligent in getting true faith, which will both approve a man unto the world, and make him honourable in the sight of God.

3. Thirdly, by this doctrine, the popish doctrine is justly condemned, which teacheth that a man is justified by his works, and that faith is not the most excellent of God's graces. Here we are taught other divinity; for, that for which a man is accepted, by that he is justified. But for their faith only were they accepted, therefore justification is only by faith. Again, that which makes a man accepted of God, that must needs be the most excellent thing of all. For God which is goodness itself, regardeth that that is the best: but God esteemed them only for their faith: therefore it is the chief of all graces of God, in regard of making a man accepted of God.

4. Fourthly, here is a pattern and precedent for God's children, how to bestow and measure out their love and estimation in the world. God loved Solomon more for his faith than for all his glory and wisdom; and esteemed Moses more for his faith than for all his learning. So deal thou with thy wife, thy child, thy servant, thy friend, and with all men. Hast thou a wife never so beautiful, loving, honest and thrifty; never so toward and obedient a child; a most wise and trusty servant; a friend for faithfulness like thine own soul? These are indeed much to be esteemed, yet think not thyself in a paradise when thou hast such; for there is a greater matter behind than all these. Look therefore further, Is thy wife, thy child, thy servant, thy friend endued with saving faith? That is worth more than all the rest. That is it that makes them beloved of God. Let that therefore make them best beloved of thee; and that which makes them so honourable before God, let that make them most honourable and most esteemed of thee. So in all men, love that in a man best, that which God loveth; and so thou shalt be sure not to lose thy love. Esteem of a man, not as the world esteemeth, not according to his strength, beauty, high place, outward gifts; but as God esteemeth him, namely, according to the measure of saving faith which thou seest in him; for is not that worthy of thy love, which hath purchased the love of the Lord God Himself?

5. Fifthly, here is comfort for all such servants of God, as having true faith, yet are in base estimation for worldly respects. Some are poor, some in base callings, some deformed in body, some of mean gifts, many in great distress and misery all their lives; most of them some way or other contemptible in the world. Yet let not this discomfort any child of God. But let them consider what it is that makes them approved of God: not beauty, strength, riches, wisdom, learning (all these perish in the using), but true faith. If then thou hast that, thou hast more than all the rest. If thou hast all them, they could but make

thee esteemed in the world; but having true faith, thou art esteemed of God; and what matter then who esteems thee and who not? This crosseth the corrupt censure of the world, who more esteem a man for his outward gifts and glory of riches or learning than for saving graces. Let God's children when they are abased, contemned, mocked, and kept from all place and preferment in the world, let them I say, appeal from their unjust judgment to the judgment of God, and be comforted in this, that though they want all things (without them) that should make them esteemed in the world, yet they have that (within them) for which God will esteem, approve and acknowledge them both in this world, and in the world to come. And they have that that will stand by them when strength and beauty are vanished, when learning and riches and honour are all ended with the world.

Thus much of the second doctrine.

III. Thirdly. In that our elders by faith obtained a good report; here we learn the readiest and surest way to get a good name. a good name is a good gift of God (Eccl. 7:3), it is a precious ointment; it is a thing that all men would have. These elders had it, and they have laid us down a platform how to get it, and it is this: 1. Get into favour with God, please Him, that is, confess thy sins, bewail them, get pardon, set the promises of God in Christ before thee, believe them, apply them to thyself as thy own, be persuaded in thy conscience that Christ did all for thee, and that He hath purchased thy acceptance with God.

Thus when thou art assured that God approves of thee, God can easily give thee a comfortable testimony in thine own conscience, and He can move the hearts of all men to think well, and open their mouths to speak well of thee; for he hath the hearts of all men in His

hand. And therefore those that are in His favour, He can bend the hearts of all men to approve them; yet this must be understood with some cautions:

1. God will not procure His children a good name amongst all men, for then they should be cursed (Luke 6:26), Cursed are ye when all men speaketh well of you. But the Lord meaneth that they shall be accepted and have a good name with the most and with the best. For indeed a good name (as all other graces of God) cannot be perfect in this life; but they shall have such a good name as in this world shall continue and increase, and in the world to come be without all blot; for sin is the disgrace of a man, therefore when sin is abolished, good name is perfect.

2. God will not procure all His children a good name, not always; for a good name is of the same nature with other external gifts of God; sometime they are good to a man, sometime hurtful; to some men good, to others hurtful. Everyone therefore that hath true faith, may not absolutely assure himself of a good name, but as far forth as God shall see it best for His own glory and his good.

3. The good name that God will give His children stands not so much in outward commendation, and speaking well of a man, as in the inward approbation of the consciences of men. They must therefore be content sometimes to be abused, mocked, slandered, and yet notwithstanding they have a good name in the chief respect, for they whose mouths do abuse and condemn them, their very consciences do approve them.

Out of all these the point is manifest, that God will procure His children a good name in this world, as far forth as it is a blessing and not a curse, and that, because they are approved of Him and by faith justified in His sight; for so to be is the only way to get a good name.

For in reason it stands thus: that those who are in estimation and good name with the Lord Himself, much more will God make them esteemed, and give them a good name with men like themselves. Hence we learn, first, that the common course of the world to get a good name is fond, and wicked, and to no purpose. They labour for riches, preferments, honour, wisdom and learning, by them to get estimation in the world. Yea, many abuse these blessings in vain ostentation, to increase their credit and name with men; and in the meantime saving faith is never remembered, which must procure them a good name with God. This is a wrong course. First, we must labour to be approved of God; and then after the good name with God, followeth the good name in the world. He therefore that labours for favour with men, and neglects the favour of God; he may get a good name, but it shall prove a rotten name in the end (Prov. 10:7), The memorial of the just shall be blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot. The good name of the wicked is rotten: 1. Because it is loathsome and stinking in the face of God, though it be never so glorious in the world. 2. Because it will not last the wearing out, but in the end vanisheth and comes to nothing, unless (as a rotting thing leaves some corruption behind it, so) their good name in the end being vanished, leaves infamy behind it. And this is the name which commonly is gotten in the world, because men first seek not a good name with God. But that good name which is obtained by faith, will stand and continue all a man's life, and at his death leave behind it a sweet perfume, and abideth forever in the world to come.

2. Secondly, this maintains the excellency of our religion against atheists, and all enemies of it, which esteem and call it a base and contemptible religion, and of which can follow no credit nor estimation. But see, their malice is here controlled. Our religion is a most glorious and excellent profession, it is the highway to get true credit and estimation. It makes a man honourable in the sight of God

and men; for by it our elders obtained a good report, which continueth fresh to this day.

3. In the third place, Were they well reported of for their faith? Therefore their faith was not hid in their hearts, but manifested in their lives. For the world cannot see nor commend them for their faith, but for the practice of faith. Here it is plain that men must not be content to keep their faith close in their hearts, but they must exercise the fruits of it in the world; and then both these together will make a man truly commendable. Thy faith approves thee unto God; but the practice of it is that that honours thee, and thy profession in the world.

4. Lastly, in that faith was that which approved our elders unto God; here is a storehouse of comforts, for all true professors of this faith.

Art thou poor? Thy faith doth make thee rich in God.

Art thou simple and of mean reach? Thy faith is true wisdom before God.

Art thou any way deformed? Faith makes thee beautiful unto God.

Art thou weak, feeble or sick? Thy faith doth make thee strong in God.

Art thou base in the world and of no account? Thy faith makes thee honourable in the sight of God and His holy angels.

Thus thou art poor and foolish and deformed and sick and base in the world, but mark how God hath recompensed thee; He hath given thee faith whereby thou art rich, and beautiful, and wise, and strong, and honourable in heaven with God. Say therefore with David, The lot is fallen to thee in a fair ground, and thou hast a goodly heritage,

namely, thy faith which thou wouldest not change for all the glory of the world. Faith is the true riches, the sound strength, the lasting beauty, the true wisdom, the true honour of a Christian man; therefore take thyself ten thousand times more beholden unto God than if He had given thee uncertain riches, the crafty (and yet foolish) wisdom, the decaying strength, the vanishing beauty and the transitory honour of this world.

If thou hast true faith, thou art sure to have enemies: 1. The wicked of the world will never brook thee, but openly or privately hate and hurt thee. 2. Then the devil is thy sworn enemy. How canst thou deal with so powerful an enemy and all his wicked instruments? Here is sound comfort: if thou hast faith, thou hast God thy friend. Labour therefore for this true faith, and then care not for the devil and all his power. Night and day, sleeping and waking, by land and sea, thou art safe and secure, the devil cannot hurt thee, thy faith makes thee accepted of God, and brings thee within the compass of His protection. The same little spark of faith, which is in so narrow a compass as thy heart, is stronger than all the power and malice of Satan. As for the malice which his instruments, wicked men in this world, shew against thee in mocks and abuses, much less care for them; for their nature is to speak evil, and cannot do otherwise. Look not therefore at them, but look up into heaven, by the eye of the soul, where thy faith makes thee beloved and approved of God Himself, and honourable in the presence of His holy angels.

And thus much of the second action, or effect of faith, the third followeth.

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Hebrews 11:3

In this verse is contained the third action or effect of faith, namely this: faith makes a man to understand things beyond the reach of man’s reason. This third effect is set out in these words by the instance of a notable example, namely of the creation of the world: 1. By the Word of God. 2. Of nothing; both which, that we may better understand, let us consider of the words as they lie in order.

Through faith.

By faith in this place (as I take it) is not meant that saving faith which justifies a man before God, but a general faith whereby a man embraces Christian religion or whereby a man believeth the Word of God in the doctrine of the law and the gospel to be true. My reason for saying this is, because a man that never had justifying and saving faith and is no member of the catholic church nor child of God, may have this gift: to believe that God by His Word made the world of nothing. Therefore, I think that this is an action of a general, and not of a saving faith.

We understand.

That is, whereas there are many things beyond the reach of reason, and therefore cannot be apprehended or understood, yet by virtue of this faith a man is brought to understand them and to believe them to be true.

Now then, whereas general faith brings understanding of many things which reason cannot reach unto, here such as be students in human learning, and which labour to attain to the deepness and perfection of it, are taught, with their travel in human studies, to have care to join faith and knowledge of religion. For there are many things which our understanding by reason cannot conceive, and many truths that philosophy cannot reach unto, nay, many also which it denies: but faith is able to persuade and demonstrate them all, and it enlightens the mind and rectifies the judgment, when as philosophy has left the mind in darkness and the judgment in error. Now, in whom sound knowledge in philosophy and this faith in religion do concur together, here is a man of a most rectified judgment, and of a deep reach in the greatest matters; but separate faith from human knowledge, and he will stumble at many truths, though he had the wit of all the philosophers in his own head. For example, that God should make the world of nothing; that it should have beginning and ending; that God should be eternal and not the world; that man's soul, being created, is immortal; these and many other truths reason cannot see, and therefore philosophy will not admit: but join faith to it, and then the crooked understanding is rectified and made to believe it. It is therefore good counsel to join both these together. Religion hinders not human learning, as some fondly think; but is a furtherance and help, or is rather the perfection of human learning; persuading, proving and convincing that which human learning cannot. And thus we see how faith makes us to understand.

But what doth it make us to understand? The text saith: "that the worlds were framed by the word of God". Amongst many expositions, we may most safely set down and approve this: God, by His Word, or Commandment, hath ordained, that is made in good order, the ages, that is the world, and all in it; and all this He did by His Word, and

(which is more strange than that) made them all of nothing. This is a wonderful thing. Reason conceives it not but disputes against it. Philosophy grants it not but writes against it. But mark the privilege of this faith: it makes a man believe it, and shews him also how it is.

Now for our better perceiving the excellency of this power of faith, here are four points set down:

I. What was created: the worlds.

II. In what manner: ordained.

III. By what means: by God's Word.

IV. Of what matter: of nothing.

Of these in order.

I. The first point is: What was made? The text answereth: the worlds. The word signifieth in the original: ages, and so it is also taken in Heb. 1:2. God made the worlds, or ages, by Christ. By this word then he meaneth these two things: First, times and seasons, which are ordinary creatures of God as well as others; for amongst other creatures (Gen. 1) are recorded also times and seasons to be God's creatures. Secondly, he understandeth the world also, and all in it: and so it is truly translated. For with good reason may the word ages signify the world, because the world and all in it had their beginning in time, have their continuance in time, and shall have their end in time again. Time begun them, time continues them, and time shall end them: and so the world is every way measured by the compass of time, and therefore it pleaseth the Holy Ghost to term the world and all in it ages, or times.

Now, whereas it is said ages, that is times and seasons were ordained of God, we learn that if time be a creature, or an ordinance of God (created for so great purposes as to be the measure of all things) to take heed of abusing so excellent an ordinance; if thou hast spent it well, spend it still better. Time is so good a thing it cannot be spent well enough. But hast thou misspent time (that is, abused it)? Take St. Paul's counsel (Eph. 5:16), "Redeem the time", that is, seeing what is past cannot be recalled, then recompense the loss of it by the well bestowing of time to come. Spend every hour well; and that thou mayest do so, be always either doing good to other, or receive good from other; do either, and time is well spent. And take heed thou be not of the number of those that often say they cannot tell how to drive away time; and therefore they devise many toys and conceits and vain pleasures, yea, many wicked and unlawful delights: and all to shift off (as they say) and deceive the time. It is wonderful to see that the wicked, whose time of joy is only in this world, should seek to hasten it, and make it seem shorter; yet so it is, the devil blinding them; but howsoever it is, seem it shorter or longer, that same one sin of misspending their time shall condemn them, if they had no more; for if account must be given for every idle word (Matt. 12:36), a fearful account remains to be made for so many idle hours. Let us then be very careful in the use of this good ordinance of God, and never devise how to pass away time: for there is no man that is a profitable member in the place where he is, that can find one hour so idle that he know not how to employ it, either in receiving or doing some good.

Were ordained.

II. The second point in this example is the manner. Did God make a perfect or an imperfect world? The text answereth: it was ordained. The word signifieth thus much: God framed the ages, that is all

creatures, visible and invisible, in a most excellent, perfect and absolute order. As in camp, every man keeps his rank and order, and no man goeth out of his standing appointed him; so every creature hath his due place and his proper use assigned him of God, so that the workmanship of the world in every creature, and in every respect, was absolute; and thus ordained is as much as perfectly made. And the whole world was as a perfect body of a man, where every member, bone, joint, vein and sinew, is in his proper place, and nothing out of square.

Objection. Was everything created in his order and due place? Whence then come so many disorders in the world? The devil hath his kingdom, authority, laws and subjects; he rules in the wicked. Now can there be any order in Satan's kingdom? Again, whence are so many alterations and subversions of kingdoms; so many wars, so much effusion of blood? The gospel is transported from country to country; civil dissensions in cities and private families; betwixt man and man; betwixt man and some creatures; betwixt creature and creatures; yea, hatred often unto the death; yea, often hatred betwixt creatures of the same kind. All these being so; where then is that excellent order wherein they were created?

I answer: the state of all creatures is changed from that wherein they were created, by the fall of our first parents. God made no disorder; He saw everything He had made, and lo it was very good (Gen. 1:31). Therefore it was in a most perfect order, for orderly comeliness is part of the goodness of a thing, but disorder is the effect of sin. It entered with sin, and it is both a companion and a reward of sin. Had we continued in our innocence, all creatures had continued in their excellent order; but when we had broken the perfect order that God had appointed us, immediately all creatures broke that order wherein they were afore, both towards us, and one amongst another.

Whilst we obeyed God, all creatures obeyed us; but when we shook off the yoke of obedience unto God and rebelled against Him, then they became disobedient unto us. Whilst we loved God, all creatures loved and revered us; but when we fell to hate the Lord, then began they to hate us, and not before. If therefore thou seest any disobedience and hatred in the creatures towards thee, any disorder and vanity amongst themselves, thank thyself for it, thou broughtest it into the world with thy sin.

This being so, we are hence taught, when we see any disorder in any creature, not to blame the Lord nor the creature, but to turn back to ourselves, to take notice of our own sins and corruptions, and to acknowledge that this was not so at the first, but our sin was the cause of it; and therefore be humbled and ashamed of ourselves, that we should confound that excellent order which God made, and all creatures (but for us) would have kept till this day. But the common practice is contrary, as I will prove in particulars.

God made man's body pure and holy, and therefore it had no need to be covered; but with sin came shame, and thence came it that God gave us apparel to cover that shame that sin had brought upon us. So oft therefore as a man puts on his apparel, he should be humbled and ashamed by it, and think thus with himself: "This was not so at the first, Adam's body was glorious. Whence came this ignominy and shame, which we must cover with apparel? It came from my sin." Therefore as often as man puts it on, so oft should he be quite ashamed of himself which hath brought this shame upon himself; so as now he must needs have a cloak to cover his shame. But do men make this end of their apparel? Nay, rather they make it a banner to display their pride and vanity; and so far are many from being ashamed of it, as that they are contrariwise proud of it. But this is as abominable and cursed and senseless a pride as if the prisoner

should be proud of his bolts and fetters, which are signs of his misdemeanour; for what is thy apparel (make the best of it) but a beautiful cloak of thy filthy shame. Then, as bolts and fetters are burdensome and shameful, though they be of gold, so is the cloak of thy shame, thy apparel, though it be silk, silver or gold; for we should not be ashamed only of ordinary apparel, or base, but even the most gorgeous; knowing that once we had a glory of our own, far above all the glory of apparel; and the ignominy that sin hath brought upon us is greater than this glory of apparel can take away.

Here I deny not the use of gorgeous apparel to those to whom it belongs, but I say to the rich men (who, by their ability), to men in authority (who, by their place and calling) may wear costly apparel: yea, and to princes, who may lawfully wear silk, silver, gold and the most excellent ornaments of precious stones or whatsoever: to all them I say, God hath granted you the use of these, but withal, be not proud of them; for you once had a glory greater than these, but lost it by sin. And sin brought a shame which these cannot hide. For, though thy apparel hide it from the world, yet can it not from God: only faith can cover it from God, therefore glory in nothing but thy faith. Be ashamed of thy apparel, yea, of thy robes and costly ornaments. And know further, that whereas thy body by sin is become so vile, a meaner cover and baser apparel were fit for it. And therefore know that whereas God hath given thee use of costly apparel and precious ornaments, He gives them not to honour thy body, but the place thou art in; and to adorn that part of His own image which He hath set in thee by thy calling. And know lastly, that if thou hadst kept that order wherein God at thy creation (as the text saith) ordained thee, thy natural glory would more have adorned thee and the place thou bearest than all this accidental and artificial glory can: and therefore glory not so much for the one as be ashamed for the loss of the other; and let thy apparel teach thee this lesson.

Thirdly, many men take much delight in some kind of meat; some in variety of meats; and some so love their belly as they care not how many creatures or kinds of creatures do die for their belly's sake: this is to be considered. For I take it a great fault for men either to be too lavish and careless how many creatures they cause to die, or (though they eat but one kind) to do it without all use or further consideration. For, mark whence comes this: that man cannot now live, or not so well; but his life must be the death of other creatures, his nourishment and preservation the destruction of other creatures. At the beginning before sin was, this was not so: no creature did either serve to clothe or feed Adam, but this came with sin; sin brought this vanity upon creatures, to die for the feeding and clothing of man: and had we stood without sin, no creature should have lost his life to be our meat. I take it therefore the duty of a man to make great use of his meat in this regard. And first, for the meat that he loves best, let him be humbled for his sin: knowing that if he had not sinned, he should have had much more sweetness in other meat, which notwithstanding should not have cost any creature his life. And secondly, for variety be not too lavish, not too riotous: consider every dish is the death of a creature of God's creation: consider again, whence comes this, that creatures must die to feed thee; not from the creation, creatures were not made to that end. Innocence would have preferred all creatures to more excellent ends. Sin it was, and thy sin that destroys so many creatures for the belly of man: it is a vanity come upon creatures for man's sin, that they must die for man's meat. The death therefore of every creature should be a corrosive to man's heart: when he seeth it, it should touch him to the quick, and make him say, This creature dieth not for itself, but for me; not for its own fault but for mine. Miserable sinner that I am, if I had right, I should rather die than it. God made it once for a better end, but my sin hath brought it to this corruption. If this consideration took place, men would not eat their ordinary fare with

so little use: nor at extraordinary occasions, be so careless how much they spend, and how many creatures they cause to die.

But you will say, God hath given us liberty in meats: differences of meats are taken away in Christ, and God hath given us use of His creatures, not only for necessity, but more liberal use, even for greater delight and comfort. I answer, I grant all this and more too, to a man that hath faith. I grant feasts and banquets are lawful for some men on some occasions. I take not away any man's liberty in meats: God hath granted it, and man ought not to take it away. I only wish that when we eat, we also would make this use of it: and that we would not too riotously abuse that liberty that God hath given us for diversity of meats: faith gives leave and liberty to eat; yet faith denies not a man to make a holy use of his eating, for his own humiliation, but rather commands it.

Fourthly, we see in the world that creatures not only die for man's feeding, but one creature feeds on another, and one creature destroyeth another to eat him. The hawk preyeth on divers kinds of birds: the fox feedeth on the same birds: the wolf on the lamb: greater fishes devour the less: dogs will eat divers kinds of creatures if they can come by them. These things are manifest, and some of them be common sports in the world. Now whence comes this fearful disorder in nature, that one creature should devour another? Came it from the creation? Was the world ordained in this state, that one creature should eat up another? The greater feed upon the less? No: but sin brought this confusion, our sin caused this pitiful massacre of all creatures one by another. Let us therefore at these sights be humbled for our sin, which caused so fearful a disorder: when thou seest thy hawk fly so fiercely and so cruelly murder a silly bird: thy hound the hart, the hare or coney; then, as God hath given thee leave in good order, measure and manner thus to deal with the creatures,

and therefore thou mayest take delight in it: so withal, make this use of it; whence comes this? It was not so from the beginning. When sin was not in the world, these would all have lodged in one cage and cabin, and one never offered to have eaten another: my sin caused this jar and this disorder betwixt these two creatures. This should humble a man because of his sin, and restrain his life from too much liberty, and his affection from too much delight in these kinds of pastimes.

Again, when we see the cruelty of the fox, the wolf, the bear, toward the sheep and other creatures; blame not too much the cruelty of the beasts, for this was not in them at their creation; but thy sin made them thus cruel one against another. Turn then into thyself, and be ashamed of it; and blame not so much the cruelty in them, as thine own sin which caused it in them.

Again, some creatures are imperfect, some in parts of their body, some in some senses; and some are loathsome and ugly to behold; and some are venomous and hurtful to the world. When thou seest it, consider whence is this. They were not thus created, for God ordained, that is made, all creatures in perfect order: but this comes from thy sin. Enter into thyself and acknowledge this, and be humbled for it, and do not so much contemn this creature for his imperfection, nor loathe him for his deformity, nor hate him for his venom; as contemn and loathe and hate thine own sins, which were the cause of all these.

Lastly, some take great delight in fair buildings, and make no use of them but for delight and pleasure. But if they consider well, they have no such cause: it was not so at the creation. Adam in his innocence had a more sumptuous palace ordained for him; namely the paradise of heaven and earth; and yet trees were not cut in

pieces, nor the earth had her stones rent out of her bowels for the building of it. Thy sin it was that destroyed this palace; and sin hath caused the necessity of these buildings. How then canst thou glory in thy buildings: wilt thou glory in thy shame? Canst thou be proud of these, when thy sin bereft thee of a better? As therefore thy house is a comfort, strength, security and delight unto thee; so add this one use also: let it in this consideration be a cause to humble thee for thy sin.

The disorder that sin hath brought into the world might be shewed in more particulars, but these may suffice, being those of which we have most common use, and therefore do most commonly abuse.

To conclude this point, I say unto all men: Dost thou see what disorder is now in the world, in thy apparel, meat, recreations, buildings? Seest thou the confusion, vanity, corruption of all creatures: the variance, dissention and hatred of creatures amongst themselves? Canst thou see all this and either not regard it at all, or take delight in it? This is a cursed and abominable delight. If a rich man should consume all his wealth, or throw it all on heaps, and then desperately set his house on fire, hath he any cause of joy to see this? If he sit still at this, you will say he is senseless: but if he laugh at it, he is mad. So God created man rich in all blessings, put him into the palace of the world, garnished this house of the world with exceeding beauty, his meat, his apparel, his recreation, his house were all excellent and glorious; He made all other creatures, amongst which there was nothing but concord, love, agreement, uniformity, comeliness and good order. Now man by sin fell, and by his fall, not only spent all his riches (that is, defaced the glory of his own estate), but also set his house (that is the world) on fire: that is, defaced the beauty of heaven and earth; brought confusion, corruption, vanity, deformity, imperfection and monstrous disorder on all creatures; set all the world together by the cares, and one creature at variance and

deadly hate with another, so that one creature doth fight, tear, wound, destroy and eat up another. O cursed and damnable sin of man, that hath so shamefully disordered that heavenly order wherein God created all things at the beginning! And miserable men are we, which can sit still and see this and not be moved. But if we rejoice and delight in it, certainly then a spiritual madness hath bewitched our souls. Let us therefore stir up ourselves and look about us; and seeing all the world on a fire about us, namely, framing in contention, hatred and all disorder, let us for our part seek to quench it: which because we cannot, therefore lament and bewail it: but much more lament and be humbled for our sin, which kindled this fire of disorder in the world.

Hitherto of the manner of the creation.

By the Word of God.

III. The third point is, by what means? The text answereth, the world was ordained in that excellent order by the Word of God. By this word is meant: 1. Not any vocal word, as if the Lord should speak unto the creatures, nor 2. secondly the substantial word of the Father, the Second Person, although I confess that by Him were made all things. Yet, I take it, it is not so meant in this place, but rather as Moses doth (Gen. 1), when he saith that in the creation God said: It is in both places a comparison taken from a prince who bids his servants do this, and they do it perfectly. The Lord in this place is like a prince. He hath His word whereby He commandeth the world to be made. That word, I take it, is His will: for God's willing of anything is an effectual commanding of it to be done; yea, it is the doing of it: for His willing of a thing to be, is more than all the commandments of all men in the world. For if He do but will it, the thing is done, whatever it be; whereas all the world may command,

and yet it is no nearer. From hence, I take it, this is manifest to be the surest sense for this place; God willed the being of all creatures, and according as He willed, they presently were; and that His will was His Word here mentioned.

1. Here then first mark a special point, that sets out the glory of the Creator: He used no labour, no motion, no pains, no servants, no means as men do. He only spake the word, and they were made: He commanded and they were created (Psa. 148:5). This shews how glorious a God He is, and His power, how omnipotent it is, who at His own will and word produced such a glorious frame of heaven and earth, so many thousand sorts and kinds of creatures in their order and due place. David most seriously considered of this when he made the 104th psalm, as appeareth if we read it. We ought also so deeply to meditate of this His glorious power, manifested in this miraculous creation, as that we (seeing it) may acknowledge with the Psalmist, Psa. 115:3, Our God sitteth in heaven, and doth whatsoever He will.

2. Did the Lord make all things by His word? Learn we then for our instruction thus much: Even when we see what is God's will concerning ourselves in any great cross or affliction whatsoever, let us subject ourselves to it and bear it, because it comes from so mighty a God as whom there is no resisting. For see, He that commanded all the world to be, and it presently was so, and nothing could disobey; then if He command any cross to cease upon thee, wilt thou resist Him? Nay, rather take St Peter's holy counsel (1 Pet. 5:5): Humble thyself under this so mighty hand of God, that He may exalt thee in due time. If thou then see His cross coming towards thee, meet it, receive it with both hands, bear it with both shoulders; if He will humble thee, resist not thou: for when again He pleaseth to exalt thee, all the devils in hell are not able to resist Him.

It followeth:

So that the things which we see, are not made of things which did appear.

IV. The fourth and last point is the matter whereof the world was made. The text saith: The things that we see, that is, all the world, were made of things never seen, that is, of a flat nothing, which here is said not to be seen, or not to appear; because how can that appear or be seen which is not? So the meaning is, when there was nothing in the world, then God made the world to be. This is the strangest thing of all in this fourth effect: for it is not so strange that the world should be made in that excellent order, or that God should make it by His Word; as that He should make it of nothing. Reason denies it. Philosophy disputes against it as absurd, and never will yield unto it. But here is the power of faith manifest; for it makes us believe and know it is so.

Hence we learn: 1. If He created the world of nothing, then He can preserve us also by nothing, that is, without means, or contrary to means; He that did the one can do the other, for the same reason is of both. This is a special point of our religion: not to tie God's providence unto means. Men use never to acknowledge it but with means; but that is no work of faith. But we ought not only to see God's providence when we see no means; but even when other means are against us – then to see it is a point of faith: and that is our duty, though it be hard. Give men health, wealth, liberty, peace, let them be guarded about with God's blessings – then they will magnify the providence of God. But take these away, and lay upon them penury, sickness or any cross, then they rage and rail, and distrust, yea, blaspheme and say, "No providence, no God." And thus God is beholding to the means, for else men would flatly deny Him.

But this argues the want of faith. For had we that faith in us whereby we believe steadfastly that God made all the world without means, that faith would also persuade us that He can preserve us being made, though means be wanting, or though they be against us. This we may make use of, whether we be in necessity and would be relieved, or in any peril and would be succoured, or in what extremity soever when means do fail us.

2. Secondly, if He made all things of nothing, then He is able also, in respect of His promises made in Christ, To call such things that are not, as though they were (Rom. 4:17). As a man by nature is the child of wrath and of the devil; He is able to make him a servant of God, and child of grace.

This may teach us: 1. Not to despair of any man's salvation, though he seem almost past all grace; for God can make anything of nothing, and therefore can put grace into that heart, wherein afore was none.

And, 2. This is a comfort to all them which through weakness of faith cannot persuade themselves of their election. For suppose thou be full of wants and imperfections, and hast a rebellious and froward heart. What then? Remember God made thee once a creature, of nothing; He can now again make thee a new creature, of nothing. He created thee without means; He can save thee, though never so many means do serve to be against thee.

And thus much for these three effects of faith, and consequently of the first part of this chapter, containing a description of faith in general.

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh” Hebrews 11:4

The second part of the chapter containeth an illustration and proof of the former description by a rehearsal of the most excellent patterns and ensamples of faith which flourished in the church of the Old Testament.

These examples are of two sorts: 1. Such as are set down severally one by one from v.4 to v.32, 2. Such as are set down jointly, many together, from thence to the end.

The examples set down severally are of two sorts: 1. Such as were the natural Israelites, and born members of the church visible, 2. Such as were not naturally members, but strangers from the church of God, till they were called extraordinarily.

Examples of such as were members of the visible church are also of two sorts: 1. Such as lived about the flood, or 2. Such as lived after the flood.

First, of such as lived before or about the time of the flood, there be three faithful men whose faith is here recorded: 1. Abel and 2. Enoch before, and 3. Noah, both before and after. All these three in order.

The excellent and most worthy examples are all grounded on some place of the Old Testament, and are continued from the beginning of the world almost to Christ's incarnation; for he beginneth with Abel, which is so near the beginning that he was the second good man that lived in the world, yea, and the first of all that had this true faith as

the only means of his salvation. For, as for Adam, he before his fall had not this faith, neither should it have saved him; but when the first means failed him, then came this faith as the second and more effectual means of his salvation. But Abel was never in possibility to be saved by anything but by this faith. And therefore Abel's faith hath the first place of commendation, and that in this verse.

And faith is here commended for three things:

I. In that he offered by it a greater sacrifice than Cain.

II. By it he obtained testimony with God.

III. By it, dead Abel yet speaketh.

I. The first effect of Abel's faith is thus set down by the Holy Ghost. By faith, Abel offered unto God a greater sacrifice than Cain.

The ordinary exposition of these words is this: that Cain and Abel coming to offer, there was no difference in the matter of their sacrifice, but only in the manner of offering, in that Abel offered by faith, and so did not Cain.

This exposition, though it is good, yet it does not fit the scope of this place, nor of Gen. 4. The right sense therefore seems to be this: Abel having faith, this faith moved him to testify his thankful heart to God. This he did by offering unto God the best and costliest sacrifice that he could, namely, the first-fruits and fattest of his sheep; whereas unbelieving Cain, having no love to testify unto God, brought only of the fruit of his ground, not of the best as Abel did, but whatsoever came first to hand. This being the true meaning of the whole, let us come to the particular points laid down in this effect, and they are three:

1. That Cain and Abel offered, that is served God.
2. That they offered sacrifices.
3. That Abel offered a better than Cain.

The first point contains their service in general, the second their service in particular, the third the difference of their service, wherein especially will appear the excellency of Abel's faith.

1. (a) First, Abel and Cain, the two first brethren in the world, offered sacrifice to the true God. How learned they this? For they had no scripture, it was penned many years after, namely, by Moses first of all. I answer, when their parents Adam and Eve had fallen, God gave them (of His infinite goodness) a covenant of grace, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). We doubt not but our first parents received this covenant and believed the promise; and this their faith taught them how to worship the true God aright.

You will say, thus Adam and Eve learned of God, but how came this to Cain and Abel? I answer, When they had been thus instructed of God, Adam as a faithful servant of God, taught the same religion and delivered the same doctrine to his children; and by it they were taught what, to whom and in what manner to offer sacrifice. And thus they did it neither by scripture, nor revelation, nor their own invention, but by the instruction of their parents.

Hence let all parents learn a lesson of Adam, the first parent that was in the world; namely, to procure the good of their children. He nurtured his children excellently: 1. He provided for them till they came to age, 2. Then he left them not, but appointed them their callings, for one was an husbandman and the other a shepherd. 3.

Not thus only, but he taught them to worship the true God, both in their callings and in the practice of religion, and therefore he taught them to offer sacrifice in a way of thankfulness unto God. All this did Adam.

So must thou do with the children God hath given thee. 1. Provide for them carefully till they are of age. Take heed they miscarry not any way for want of things needful. 2. So bring them up as they may be apt to live in some godly calling whereby to do good in His church; and that calling thou must appoint them according to the fitness of their gifts. Adam appointed them not both one calling, but diverse callings, according to the diversity of their gifts; and thou must see it be a lawful and honest calling, for so are both these. Then 3. (the greatest matter of all these) teach them religion, and the true manner of fearing and worshipping God; that as by the two first, thy child may live well in this world, so by this he may be made an heir of the kingdom of heaven.

Adam was the first father, and father of us all; let all then follow him in this practice; and if we follow him in one, follow him in both. Divers will be as careful for their bodies and for their callings as Adam was, but how few are as careful to teach them religion for the preferment of their souls to life eternal? But parents must have care of both these, else they shall answer for their child at the day of judgment; and though he perish in his own sin, yet his blood will God require at the father's hands. For God made him a father in his room, and he discharged not the duty of a father unto their child.

(b) Secondly, in that Cain offered as well as Abel. Hence we learn divers instructions.

(1). It is a common opinion that if a man walk duly and truly in his calling, doing no man harm, but giving every man his own, and so do

all his life long, God will receive him and save his soul; but the truth is this: If men do thus, it is good and commendable and they must be exhorted to continue, but if they stand upon this for salvation, they cast away their souls. For mark here, Cain was a man that walked in an honest calling; and more than that, he took pains and laboured in it (which all men do not that have honest callings). And more than all these, when Abel offered, he came and worshipped God also; and he did outwardly in such sort as no man could blame him, but only God that saw his heart; and for all this, yet he is a wicked Cain, and that is all that the Word of God gives him (1 John 3:12). Then it is manifest, that to walk in a man's calling justly and uprightly, doing no man harm, will not serve the turn. Cain did it, and yet was accursed. We must then go further than Cain, else we shall go with Cain to the place where he is.

Reason not with thyself, I work hard, I follow my calling, I hurt no man: thus could Cain reason, and yet but cursed Cain. Thou must then beside these, get that that Cain did not: Learn in thy conscience to see and feel thy sin, to be grieved for it, so as thou mayest say, My sickness, my poverty, my crosses grieve me, but nothing so much as mine own sins, these trouble me above all, and this grief swalloweth up all the rest. And there is another thing which I seek above all, not gold, silver or promotion; but reconciliation with my God and His favour in Jesus Christ. If thou hast these two, then thou goest beyond Cain, then shalt thou stand before God with Abel and be accepted. Remember these two: humiliation for sin, and desire of reconciliation: these two are the sum of religion. If thou hast these, thou art blessed with Abel, if not, cursed with Cain, howsoever thou livest in the world. If thou say, Cain killed his brother, and so would not I do for all the world, I will do no man hurt in body nor goods; this will not serve, for it is said that God had no respect to Cain

before he killed his brother, even when he offered his sacrifice; and therefore this duty is most necessary, and there is no shifting it off.

(2). Cain offered as well as Abel; yea, Cain offered before Abel, as it is manifest in Gen. 4:3. And yet Abel's sacrifice was better when it came to the proof, and was accepted, and not Cain's which came first. Hence we learn that a man may be more forward than many other in many outward duties of religion, and yet not be accepted of God. Another may not be so forward to the duty, and yet when he comes, be better accepted. Whence comes this? What? Is forwardness in good duties a fault? Nothing less: but hence it is, he that outwardly is most forward, may come in hypocrisy and without faith; the want whereof makes his forwardness nothing worth. Many such have we in our church: great frequenters of places and exercises of religion, and yet they come but as Cain did, or it may be in worse intents. Thy forwardness is to be commended, but take this with thee also: Care not so much to be first at the sermon, or to be there oftener than other, as to go with true faith, repentance and a heart hungering for grace. If not, boast not in thy forwardness. Cain offered before Abel, and yet was not accepted; and so there may come an Abel after thee, and bring faith with him and be accepted, when thou with thy hypocritical forwardness shall be rejected, as Cain was.

(3). Thirdly, did Cain offer as well as Abel? Hence we learn that the church militant is a mixed and compounded company of men; not of one sort, but true believers and hypocrites mingled together; as here, in the very infancy of the church, there was a Cain worshipping in shew, as well as Abel that worshipped in truth. So was it in the infancy, so in her perpetual growth, and so shall it be in the last age of the church: the good shall never be quite separated from the bad, until Christ Himself do it at the last judgment. Goats shall always be mingled among the sheep, till Christ the great shepherd do separate

them Himself (Matt 25:34). And he that imagineth a perfect separation till then, imagineth a fancy in his brain, and such a church as cannot be found upon the earth.

This being so, let no man therefore be afraid to join himself to the visible church; neither let any that are in it go out of it, because the bad are mingled with the good; for so it hath been always, and ever will be. He then that will go out of a church because there be hypocrites in it, must go out of the world, for such a church is not found but triumphant in heaven.

(4). Fourthly, in that Cain and Abel offered, hence we learn that the church of God which truly professeth his name, hath been ever since the beginning of the world. For this church was in the household of Adam, when there was no more but it in the world; for sacrifice to God is a sign of the church. Yea, and beside the sacrifice, they had a place appointed where Adam and his family came together to worship God; for so much Cain intimateth in Gen 4:14 and 16. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, that is, not only out of his favour and protection, but from the place of His solemn service, and where He wanted to manifest His special presence to His children serving Him; and therefore Cain, as being excommunicate, complains (v.14) because he must leave it. Thus the church hath been from the beginning, and therefore is truly called Catholic.

The papists abuse this place notoriously; for whereas the church hath been so ancient, they argue therefore it is above the Scripture; yea, and that we could not know it to be Scripture but by the ancient testimony of the church.

We must know that the Scripture is two ways to be considered: first, as it was written and penned by holy men, and so it is later than the church, for Moses was the first penman of Scripture; but secondly, as

it is the Word of God, the substance, sense and truth thereof is much more ancient than the church; yea, without the Word of God there can be no church, for without faith is no church (because the church is a company of believers), and without the Word is no faith; therefore, no word, no faith; no faith, no church. So then the Scripture was before the church, but penned after.

Thus we see that Cain and Abel offered.

2. Now secondly, what offered they? Sacrifices. Sacrifices were used in the worship of God for two ends: (1). When a sacrifice was offered, especially of beasts, when a man saw the blood of the beasts poured out, it put him in mind of his own sins, and the desert of them, and taught him to say thus: Even as this creature is here slain, and his blood distils and drops away, so my sins deserve that my blood should be shed, and my soul drenched in hell forever. This creature can die but one death, for it sinneth not; but my sins deserve both the first and the second death.

(2). Secondly, sacrifices served to put them in mind of the Messiah to come; and the slaying of the beasts shewed them how the Messiah should shed His blood, and give His life for the sins of the people. These are the two principal ends of sacrifices, and for these two ends did Cain and Abel offer: Cain in hypocrisy and for fashion's sake, Abel in truth, conscience and sincerity.

As it was in the old sacrifices, so it is in our Sacraments of the New Testament: whereof the sacrifices were all types:

(1). In baptism, sprinkling of the water serves to shew us how filthily we are defiled with our own sins. It signifieth the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon the heart of a sinner, for his sanctification from sin.

(2). In the Supper, the breaking of the bread signifies: 1. How we should be broken in humiliation for our sins, and the pouring out of the wine, how our blood and life should be shed, and poured out for our sins, if we had that we deserve. And 2. secondly, they represent unto us how the body of Christ was broken, and His blood poured out for our sins: which He was content to suffer under the wrath of His Father for our sakes; so that we see both the sacrifices and sacraments of the Old, as also of the New Testament, all aimed at these two ends: to shew us our sins and our misery by sin, and to foretell, or represent our reconciliation by Christ. Which being so, our lesson is this:

We have all received those two Sacraments, the first once, the second often. Now, if they have been duly received of us, they ought to have this double use unto us: 1. To cause us to make a search of our own sins, and of our misery by sin; and seeing it, to be cast down and humbled, considering how corrupt our hearts are, and how wicked our lives. And 2. secondly, when this is so, then to make us seek for reconciliation with God by faith in Christ, to make us desire it, love it and pray for it, above all things in the world. Abel not only offered, but offered so, as that it put him in mind of his sin, and of his redemption by the death of the Messiah to come. So we must not only outwardly receive the Sacraments, but so receive, as that we may see and be humbled for our sin, and seek to be reconciled to God in Christ.

Such use also ought we to make of hearing the Word, and not to be content with bare hearing of it, or to get a general knowledge out of it; but it must give us a special sight of our own estate by sin, and urge us forward to seek the favour of God in Christ. Religion stands not in hearing the Word and receiving the Sacraments with the congregation, though it be done never so often and never so

formally; but so to hear and so to receive as that they may work in us those two things: and that is the pith and life of religion. And whosoever he be that professeth religion and sheweth not the fruit of it in these two, that man's profession is in vain, and it will go for no payment at the day of judgment.

Thus we see they offered, and what they offered. It followeth: A greater sacrifice than Cain.

3. The third and last point is the difference of these sacrifices. For although Cain offered as well as Abel; and offered sacrifice as well as Abel; yet was there a difference in their sacrifices, for Abel's was better than Cain's. This is the chief point, for this sets down what was that excellency of his faith for which he is here commended. Abel is not commended for offering by his faith, for so did Cain who had no faith; nor for offering sacrifice by his faith, for so did Cain that had no faith; but because that by his faith he offered a better sacrifice that Cain could.

The Holy Ghost calls Abel's a better or greater sacrifice, because Abel brought the best and fattest of his sheep, and so bestowed the most cost he could; as signifying that he would have bestowed more cost, had he known how to have done it. For he that gives as he hath, would give more if he had it. And he that doth the best he can in anything, it is certain that he would do better if he could. Cain, contrariwise, brought not the best of his fruits, but either the worst, or whatsoever came first to hand; as thinking that whatsoever he brought was good enough; and therefore worthily is Abel said to have offered a better sacrifice than Cain.

And further, this holy practice of Abel came to be a law written, even one of the commandments of the ceremonial law; namely that the firstborn should be offered to God (Exod. 24:19), and the first-fruits

of the corn (Lev. 23:10), etc. and that nothing that was lame, blind, maimed, or had any blemish in it should be offered to the Lord (Deut. 15:21). Abel here did that which even these laws commanded; and these laws commanded the same that he did. Thus God vouchsafed to honour His servant Abel, for his obedient and honest heart; even to make his practice the ground and beginning of one of His own laws; that so the Israelites in all their generations might in their daily practices remember this worthy deed of holy Abel, to his perpetual honour.

Now for us the truth is, this law binds us not; for it was a ceremony, and is ended in Christ. Yet the equity and use of it reacheth even to us; namely, it teacheth us when we will give anything unto God, to give the best we have. This is the equity of these ceremonial laws, which commanded them to give to the Lord their firstborn and their first-fruits and the fattest of their cattle; and so much of them do still bind us. Now from this rule, we are taught divers duties:

(1). To the parent. Hast thou many children, and wilt thou give some to the Lord? namely, to serve Him in the ministry? The practice of the world is to make the eldest a Gentleman, the next a Lawyer, the next a Merchant; he that is the youngest, or least regarded, or that hath some infirmity in wit, or deformity in body, set him to school, let him be a Minister. But Abel's sacrifice controls this profanes course of the world. Learn therefore by him, whomsoever of all thy children thou findest fittest in gifts and graces of body and mind, whom thou lovest best, and most esteemest; he is fittest for the Lord, and the Lord is most worthy of him. Consecrate him to the Lord, for His service and the ministry.

(2). To the young man. He being in the strength and ripeness of wit, senses, memory, capacity, and in the best of his age: he saith, I will

take my pleasure now I am fittest for it; I will repent at the end of my days, and that is a fitter time. This is a vile policy of the devil, to dishonour God, and to cast away their souls. What a grief is it to give the devil his young years, the strength of his body and wit, and to bring his withered old age unto God? Nay, before, God will not accept thy rotten sacrifice of old age, but rather give thee up to the devil, that he may have thee altogether, which hath had the best: Then follow rather Solomon's counsel (Eccl. 12:1), who bids thee, Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Remember Abel's sacrifice, it was of the best. So thou hast no sacrifice but thyself to offer: offer then the best; thy young years is the best time, give them unto God.

(3). To all Christians. Abel offered the best. It teacheth us all, if we will profess and serve God, not to do it by the halves, or for shew and fashion's sake, or negligently, as not caring how. Thus to do is but to offer the sacrifice of Cain; and that makes most professors go away with their service unaccepted, as Cain's was. For God will have all or none, He is worthy to have no partner; He must be served with all the heart, with soul and body, so that a man must consecrate himself wholly unto Him (2 Kings 23:25). It is the special commendation of good king Josiah, that he turned unto the Lord with all his heart and soul and might; and for that, he is preferred before all kings before or after him; not that Josiah could fulfil the law perfectly, as is required; but it is meant of the endeavour of his heart and life; by which he strove with all his might to serve God as well as he could. His example is ours.

We profess religion, we must look that our hearts affect it; we profess a turning from sin, we must take heed it be not formal and from the lips, but from the heart. So when we practice any duty of religion, whether we pray or hear the Word, or receive the Sacraments (this is

the sacrifice that we can offer), we must not do them coldly and carelessly, but with zealous affection and resolution from the heart. Otherwise, if we serve God for fashion's sake, and our hearts are on the world and our own lusts, we offer the sacrifice of cursed Cain, and we, with our formal religion shall go to him. But let us offer the sacrifice of Abel: that is, though it be never so little, yet let it be the best we can, and all we can, and God will accept us, as He did Abel. And thus the parent should give God his best child; the young man his best years; every man his best part, which is his heart. And thus we follow the steps of holy Abel, who offered to God the best sacrifice he had. This was the fruit of his faith: even so, that parent, that young man, that professor that hath true faith, will do so likewise.

Hitherto of the first effect of Abel's faith.

II. It followeth, By the which he obtained witness that he was righteous.

This is the second effect of Abel's faith, whereby it is commended. For the meaning. by faith, he means saving faith, which makes a man just before God, and no other. For whereas he had said before that by faith our elders had obtained a good report. He proves that general, by this example of Abel; therefore that saving faith which was meant there, is also meant here.

These words set down two benefits which Abel had by his saving faith: 1. First, he was just by it; 2. Secondly, God testified that he was so.

1. For the first, Abel's faith made him just and righteous, not because his faith was an excellent quality of that virtue in itself, as to make him just; but because it was an instrument whereby he apprehended and applied to himself the righteousness of the Messiah to come,

whereby he might stand just before God. This was his righteousness, which he had by faith; for he trusted not to any holiness of his own, though (it is out of the question) he knew he was the son of man who once was perfectly righteous: but the trust and confidence of his heart was in the righteousness of that blessed seed which, God had promised, should break the serpent's head. This promise he knowing, believed it, applied it to himself, and this faith made him righteous.

Here we learn a worthy lesson of Christianity; namely, that the true and the undoubted way to heaven is a holy and lively faith in Jesus Christ; for this faith makes a man righteous, and that righteousness opens him the gate of heaven. To this end (saith the apostle) being justified by faith, we have peace with God. But by whom? Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the use of this doctrine, we must renew our former exhortation, which indeed cannot be too often pressed to the conscience. There is none of us so vile, none so profane, but we desire salvation. If we do, then we must tread the beaten way to it. For we are not born heirs of it; neither can we come hither by chance; but there is a way that must be taken, and that way is but one; all others are misleading by-ways. Again, the way must be taken in this life, else it is too late. Now, this way is to be a just and righteous man. With this, never man failed; and without this, never man attained to salvation, for no unclean thing can come into the kingdom of heaven (Rev. 21:27). Never was man justified there, which was not just before; and that must here be begun, which in heaven is to be perfected. In this life, therefore, we must seek to be just. Now, our good works will not serve to make us just, for they are all unable to endure the trial of God's justice. And if we stand in them, and they prove not able to satisfy God's justice, then instead of saving us, they will condemn us. Therefore, with

Abel, let us go out of ourselves, deny ourselves and cleave only to Christ's righteousness in life and death; this is the way that never will deceive us.

But some will say, We walk in this way. I answer, He that walketh in a way may be traced by his steps. So then, show your steps of holiness, of devotion, of charity, etc. These must show your faith. Leave these steps behind you, and then your faith is good. Thus did holy Abel: believe thou it, acknowledge it, and follow thou after him; and renounce all by-paths which the papists, or thy own brain imagineth. Let this one doctrine sink into thy heart instead of many, and let not the devil strake it out. For if thou walk in this way, my soul for thine it will bring thee to heaven. If not, at the last day this doctrine will condemn thee, because it shewed thee this way, and thou wouldest not walk in it.

Secondly, observe: He saith, Abel was approved and accepted of God. How proves he that? Because his work pleased God: as who say, his works cannot please God unless his person do; therefore in that his works do, thence he concludeth that his person did: it is the reason of the Holy Ghost, and therefore infallible.

In the framing of this reason, the Holy Ghost teacheth us a great point of our religion: namely, that first a man's person must please God before his actions can. And after the person, then the actions. This is plain in these words, for it is said, he first obtained witness that he was righteous himself, and then God testified of his gifts. So likewise more plainly in Gen. 4:4. God had respect first to Abel, and then to his offering. So that the truth is manifest, No work pleaseth God before the worker does. This being so, hath excellent uses:

First, it overthroweth a main pillar of Romish religion; Justification by works. For how can a man be justified by his works when he

himself must be just before the works can be? Unless he be just, his works be wicked. If they be wicked before his person be just, how can they then justify him? And if the person be once just, what needs it then to be again justified by works? Good works make not a man good, but a good man makes a work good; and shall that work that a man made good return again and make the man good? 1. That is absurd in reason, and 2. It is needless: For the man is good already, else the work could not have been good. We may therefore say, works are rather justified by the person of a man, than his person by the works; and it is a most vain thing to look for justification from that which thou thyself must first justify before it be just. If we had no other reasons against justification by works but this, this would be sufficient.

Secondly, here we learn, that till a man is called, and his person justified and sanctified, all that ever he doth is sin. 1. His common actions, his eating, drinking, sleeping, walking, talking, are all sins. Yea, 2. The works of his calling, and his labour in the same, though never so just, equal and upright. 3. Further, his civil actions, namely, the practice of civil virtues, his outward gravity, meekness, sobriety, temperance, quietness, uprightness, and all outward conformity, are all sins. Yea, more than all this, his best actions, namely his practising of the parts of God's worship, or his deeds of charity, his prayer, his hearing the word, his receiving of the sacraments, his giving of alms; they are all sins unto him, if he have not a believing and penitent heart. Yea, such sins as shall condemn him, if he had no other.

Objection. This should seem strange divinity, that the most holy actions as prayer etc. should be damnable sins. I answer, they are in themselves holy and good, and as far forth good as God hath commanded them; yet in the doer they are sins, because he doth

them from a foul and unholy heart; for the same action may be holy in itself, and in regard of God the author of it, and yet a sin in him that is the doer of it. As clear water, pure in the fountain, is corrupted or poisoned by running through a filthy and polluted channel, so are even the best actions sins; as even the preaching of the word to a minister whose heart is not cleansed by faith and his person accepted of God; it is a sin unto him, and (if he repent not) shall be his condemnation. Cain sinned not only in hating and murdering his brother, in lying and dissembling with God; but Cain sinned also even in offering sacrifice. And Abel's sacrifice had been a damnable sin, but that his person was justified before God. And the reason of all this is good; for nothing in the work is able to make an action acceptable to God, but only the acceptance of the person by Christ. This being so, it stands us every one in hand to look to ourselves, and to labour above all things for faith and repentance; that so our persons may be accepted righteous before God, and thereby our actions accepted also. If it be a miserable thing that all thy actions, even holy actions, should be sins, then labour to be justified, for that only can make thy works accepted. If not, then though thou labour never so much to be approved in the world, and set never so glorious a shew upon thy works to the eyes of men, they are all abominable sins in the sight of God; and at the day of judgment they shall go for no better. Preach and teach all thy life long; nay, give thy life to die for religion. Give all thy good to the poor; deprive thyself of all delights. Build churches, colleges, bridges, highways, etc.; and there may come a poor shepherd, and for his keeping of sheep be accepted, when thou with all this pomp of outward holiness mayest be rejected. And why this? Only because he had faith, and thou hast none; his person was justified before God, and thine is not. Therefore, let this be my counsel from Abel: Labour not so much to work glorious works, as that which thou doest, do in faith. Faith makes the meanest work accepted; and want of faith makes the most glorious work

rejected; for so saith the text: Abel must be accepted, else his sacrifice is not. Thus we see Abel was just, and God so accounted him.

2. The second point is, that God gave testimony he was so, in these words: God giving testimony.

What testimony it was that God gave of Abel and his gift, it is not expressed in the Word, and so it is not certain; but it is very likely that when he and Cain offered, God in special mercy sent fire from heaven and burned up Abel's sacrifice, but not Cain's; for so it pleased the Lord often afterward when He would shew that He accepted any man, or his work, He answered them by fire from heaven. So he burned up the sacrifice that Aaron offered (Lev. 9:24). So He answered Solomon (2 Chr. 7:1. And so, Elias (2 Kin. 18:28). And so it is likely that he gave this testimony that he accepted Abel and his offering. This was a great prerogative that Abel and the fathers in the Old Testament had. We have not this, but we have a greater, for we have that that is the substance, and truth, and body of this; for we have also the fire of God, that is, His Spirit comes down into our hearts every day, not visibly but spiritually, and burns up in the heart of a believer his sins and corruptions, and lights the light of true faith, that shall never be put out.

The use hereof is this: As no sacrifice in the old law pleased God but such as was burned by fire from heaven, sent down either then or before; so our sacrifices of the New Testament (that is, our invocation of God's name, our sacrifice of praise, our duties of religion, our works of mercy and love) never please God, unless they proceed from a heart purged by the fire of God's Spirit, that is, from a believing and repentant heart; both which are kindled and lighted and daily continued by that fire of God's Spirit. Therefore it is that

Paul saith (1 Tim. 1:4), Love must come out of a pure heart, and good conscience, and faith unfeigned. The duties of religion and works of love coming from this purged heart, ascend into the presence of God as a smoke of most acceptable sacrifices, and are as a sweet perfume in the nostrils of the Lord.

Now, of what did God thus testify? Of his gift.

It may be here asked at the first: How can Abel give a gift to God: hath the Lord need of anything, and are not all things His? I answer, God is sovereign, Lord of heaven and earth and all creatures; yet hath He so given His creatures unto man to use, as that they become man's own, and so He may esteem and use them; and being man's, a man may in token of his thankfulness return them again to God; especially seeing God accepts them being so offered as most free gifts.

This sheweth us: (1). First, the wonderful mercy of God, that whereas we can offer Him nothing but His own, He vouchsafeth to accept a gift offered of His own, even as though we had of our own to offer.

(2). See here a difference betwixt the sacrifices of the Old, and sacraments of the New Testament. In their sacrifices, they gave something to God, and therefore they are called gifts; in our sacraments we receive daily grace from God.

(3). In that the sacrifices of the Old law are called gifts, we must know that it is typical, and hath excellent significations unto us:

(a) It signifieth that the Messiah should be given of God freely, for the salvation of His elect; and that Christ the Messiah should willingly give Himself to be a redeemer.

(b) It signifieth that every man that looks for salvation by Christ, must give himself to God, and all that is in him. So Paul exhorteth (Rom.6:13), Give yourselves unto God, and your members weapons of righteousness. When we give anything to a man, we make him Lord of it. If we then give our souls and bodies to the Lord, we must give them so, as that they may obey and serve Him, and be ruled by Him, and serve for His glory, howsoever he shall use them. We profess religion; and make great shews; but to give ourselves in obedience to God is the life of religion. But contrary is the course of the world. For most professors are given up to sin and Satan. Their bodies given to drinking, gaming, uncleanness, injustice; their souls to envying, hatred, malice, revenge, lust, pride, self-love. God hath nothing escpt it be a face. But that will not serve the turn. He will have all, body and soul; for He had made all, and he redeemed all. We go against equity: Christ gave His body and soul for us; why should we not give our again to Him? Again, this gift is not as other gifts; for here all the profit redounds to the giver; the glory indeed in His, but the gain and profit is our own. Why then should we withhold ourselves from God? It argueth, we know nor feel not what Christ hath given us; for if we did, if we had ten thousand lives, we would think them all too little for Him.

And thus much of the first and second effect of Abel's faith; the third followeth.

III.

By which Abel being dead, yet speaketh.

The third effect whereby Abel's faith is commended is laid down in these words. Concerning the meaning whereof there is some difference, which is briefly to be examined. Some think the words should be thus translated: By which also Abel being dead, is yet

spoke of; making the meaning to be that by his faith he obtained a good name to all posterity; but it seems this cannot stand, for two causes: First, because that is already affirmed of Abel and all the rest, in the second verse, that through faith, they had obtained a good report; which therefore might seem needless so soon to be repeated again. Secondly, for that afterwards Christ's blood and Abel's compared together, it is not said that Christ's blood is better spoken of than Abel's, but that it speaketh better things than Abel's did. Therefore the words are rightly translated.

Now, for the true sense of them, it is likely the Holy Ghost here hath relation to the story whence it is taken; where, upon Cain's murder, God saith to him, The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth. And why crieth it? .Namely, for vengeance against so monstrous a murder; and crieth to all men to behold it, and to abhor the like; and so after a sort he continueth to speak to this day. So that the words, in the true and full sense of them, do import these two points:

1. That Abel spake when he was dead,
2. That in a sort, Abel still speaketh.

1. For the first, Abel spake and cried when he was dead. But how? Not with a vocal speech, but the phrase is figurative and imports thus much, as if the Lord had said to Cain, Thou hast killed thy brother closely, and it may be hast hid him in the sand or buried him and thinkest no man knoweth of it; but thou must know Cain, this thy fact is evident to me, as if Abel had told me; I know thou killedst him; and if thou wonder how I know, I tell thee his blood told me, for it cried in my ears, and yet it crieth out against thee; for though Abel be dead, his blood yet speaketh. And this is true of Abel's, so of all men's blood; and as of blood, so of all other oppressions, though done by

never so great men. Murders, oppressions, and all wrongs done to God's children, they cry to God against the oppressors, though the poor oppressed men dare scarce name them; they need not, for their blood doth; yea, even their very tears cannot be shed but God takes them up, and puts them in His bottle (Psa. 56:8), and will know who shed them. This blood crieth against them that shed it, yea, tears cry against them that cause them. This affordeth us a double instruction: First; here it is apparent that God seeth and knoweth the sins of men, though the men be never so mighty, or their sins never so secret. For though men convey them never so closely, and labour to hide them with all the means that the wit of man can devise, yet the very dead creatures cry out and do proclaim the sins and sinners in the ears of God, as fully as the voices of living men, can discover anything unto men. Privy oppressions and goods gotten by deep deceit, lie hid to the world; but (Hab. 2:11,12), the stone out of the wall shall cry, and the beams out of the timber shall answer it, Woe be to him that buildeth his house with blood, and directs a city by iniquity; as though he had said, God knoweth every stone and every piece of timber in their stately houses, which they have gotten by deceit or oppressing of the poor. Privy conspiracies and plots of treason are laid against princes and magistrates; and often in so secret manner as in man's reason not to be discovered. But God hath many ways to find them out, and they never escape His privy search; and therefore the Holy Ghost adviseth, Curse not the king, no not in thy thought, nor the great ones in thy bedchamber; for the fowls of the heaven shall carry thy voice, and that which hath wings shall declare the matter (Eccl. 10:20). So that whatsoever is plotted never so privily, or conspired in the secret closets of ungodly men, God knows it, and hath means enough to disclose it to the world. And in our daily experience, God magnifieth Himself mightily in revealing murders. For, bring the murderer before the dead corpse, and usually it bleedeth, or giveth some other testimony whereby it speaketh even

as Abel's blood did, This is the murderer. Nay more, for Abel's blood spake to God, but here even to men also.

And of this it is hard to give any reason at all, but the secret and immediate hand of God, thereby shewing Himself to know all secret sins, and to be able to disclose them by strange means.

The use of this doctrine is to fear all men from sinning, though they think it possible to conceal their sins from the world; for this is one of the strongest and commonest encouragements that men take to live in a sin, if they think it likely to be concealed. But here they see how false a ground that is. For if they can conceal it from men, yet can they not from God; and if God know it, then can He reveal it to the world when it pleaseth Him.

Again, whereas Abel's blood cried when he was dead, it teacheth us that God hath a care of Abel both living and dead; for it were nothing to say that his blood cried, if God heard not that cry. But it is apparent He heard it, for He revenged it, and punished Cain when Abel was dead and could not revenge it himself. And this care God hath not over Abel alone, but over all his children; and as the psalmist saith, Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints (Psa. 116:15); that which is vile and of no regard in the world, is precious with God. Tyrants make havoc of the church, and kill them up by heaps; but God records up every one, and will not fail to revenge it when they are dead. For if God hath bottles for the tears of His servants, surely much more hath He bottles for their blood.

The use whereof is to teach us to all extremities of danger or distress, to learn patience; yea, though we be sure to die, yet (as Christ saith), To possess our souls with patience (Luke 21:19). For we have one who will hear the cause and revenge our quarrel when we are gone; so that if we be patient we lose nothing, but if we be impatient, we

get nothing. Let us therefore hold our tongues; for the wrong done to us crieth loud enough to God for revenge, who will hear it as assuredly as He did Abel's. And thus we see how Abel spake then, even after he was dead.

2. The second point is that he speaks also yet; and that three ways:

(1). First, his faith yet speaketh because it admonisheth all men everywhere, who either hear or read this story, to become such as Abel was, namely, true worshippers of the true God; for in Abel's example, it provokes all men to be like him, because it assureth them of the same regard and reward with God that Abel had; and so Abel's faith is a never-dying preacher to all ages of the church.

Here we learn that the holy examples of God's children are real teaching, and loud preaching to other men. For there is a double teaching, namely, in word or deed.

It belongs to the minister to teach in word; and to all men to teach by their deeds and good examples; and if the minister teach not thus also, it is the worse both for him and his hearers.

It sufficeth not for him to teach by vocal sermons, that is, by good doctrine; but withal by real sermons, that is by good life. His faith, his zeal, his patience, his mercy and all other of his virtues must speak, and cry, and call other men to be like to him; which if he practice carefully in his life as Abel did, then shall his virtues speak for him to posterities when he is dead.

(2). Again, Abel, though dead, may be said to speak, because howsoever his body be dead, yet in soul and spirit he liveth with God in heaven. And thus the word speaketh may be understood, because it is here opposed to death; by which he being dead yet speaketh;

that is, being dead in body, yet liveth in soul; which life with God was obtained unto by his true and saving faith.

(3). Thirdly, he may be said to speak yet, as all other of God's martyrs are said to cry in the Revelation, from under the altar, How long Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwelleth on the earth? (Rev. 6:10). As this is true of all martyrs, so especially of Abel, the first martyr of all; which words are not spoken, neither by him nor them vocally with utterance of voice, but it is so said to signify what fervent desire the servants of God have in heaven, of the full manifestation of God's glory in their bodies, and of an utter abolishment of sin in the whole world; which their desire they doubtless utter to God in a more excellent manner than in this world we can utter anything with our voice; and thus Abel speaks yet, and shall speak till the world's end.

Hitherto of the first example, the example of Abel.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” Hebrews 11:5.

The second example of faith is taken also out of the old world before the flood; and it is of Enoch, the seventh from Adam; to whom strange and miraculous things befell by reason of his faith.

I. Let the meaning of the words be first examined:

By faith

That is, by his confidence in the Messiah, or his saving faith; he was taken away.

Taken away

That is, from earth to heaven, not by an ordinary work, but miraculously; this is evident by the next words:

That he should not see death

That is, that he should not feel death, nor any dissolution of soul and body; and therefore his taking away was miraculous. For to be taken away by death is an ordinary work; but to be taken away and yet not die, that is miraculous and extraordinary; and such was Enoch.

So then, the substance of these words is thus much: Enoch having this grace from God, to believe steadfastly in the Messiah to come, was likewise honoured with this high prerogative, to be taken into

heaven without tasting of death, and to the end that he might not die. Thus we have the meaning.

Now concerning this translation of Enoch, there are two opinions:

1. Some think he was translated in soul only, and not in body; and they say he died in the translation, so as his soul was only taken up in to heaven, and his body slept in the earth. Though this appears false at first sight, yet let us see their reasons, and what they can say for themselves.

(i) The first reason is this: That no mortal body unglorified can enter into heaven; but there is no mention of his glorification, therefore his body could not come in heaven.

Answer: It is certain it was glorified ere it came in heaven. If they reply, It is not mentioned; I answer, it followeth not, that therefore it was not; for every circumstance of every action is not mentioned. For many circumstances of actions must necessarily be supposed, and such an one was this. Again, the glorification of his body is here plainly enough implied where it is said, he was translated, that he should not see death. Now, if his body saw not death, it was made immortal, which is a special part of glorification.

(ii) Their second reason: Christ was the first that ever entered into heaven both in body and soul; and for proof thereof they bring St. Paul, where he saith: Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep (1 Cor. 15:20).

Answer: True indeed of them that sleep, that is of all that die; for Christ entered into heaven both in body and soul first of all them; but Enoch never died, as the text here avoucheth. Therefore that place

hinders not, but Enoch might be in heaven in his body before Christ's human flesh ascended thither.

(iii) Thirdly, they argue out of St John: No man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended; the Son of man which is in heaven (John 3:13). But, say they, this Son of man is not Enoch but Christ; therefore none but Christ ascended bodily into heaven.

Answer: That place is not meant of corporal ascending, but of understanding mystical and heavenly things. No man ascendeth to the full knowledge of heavenly mysteries but Christ alone, who descended from the bosom of His Father.

And thus we see, this opinion hath no strength of argument to rest upon; but we may safely hold (notwithstanding anything that can be said against it) that Enoch was translated both in body and soul. And if any man yet doubt how he could be taken up in body before he was glorified; we are to know, though he died not, yet his body was changed, as those men shall be which shall be found alive at the last day (1 Thess. 4:17).

2. The second opinion is that Enoch was taken up in soul and body into Paradise (some say the heavenly, but the most the earthly paradise), and there lives in his mortal and corruptible body, and must before the last day come again in his body with Elias and fight against Antichrist; and when by their doctrine they have overcome him, he shall by violence kill them, and so they shall die martyrs. And this is the general received opinion of most papists. But it is a mere conceit, and a dream, and there is no ground for it, but good argument against it.

For first, as for the earthly paradise, it was defaced by the flood; nor do we read that ever man was in it but Adam. And some of their own

fables tell us that Seth went to the gates of Paradise, when his father Adam was sick, to get some Physick out of Paradise for his father, but he could not get in. Nor do we find any mention of it afterwards. So that it is likely in all reason that it was defaced by the universal flood.

And if they mean he was translated into the heavenly Paradise, I answer, thither can no unclean thing come. But a mortal body is unclean, and themselves say he was taken away in his mortal body, and in it shall come again and die. Therefore Enoch having a mortal and unglorified body cannot be in the highest heavens; into which nothing can enter which is not glorified and made immortal.

If they allege Ecclesiasticus 44:16, Enoch pleased God and was translated into Paradise, etc., I answer, we need not call in question the authority of the book, nor answer that it is not in the canon of faith. For the text is corrupted wilfully by some that shewed themselves in the Latin too bold with the text, both there and elsewhere; for in the Greek original there is no such matter as Paradise, but the words are these: Enoch pleased God and was translated for an example of repentance to the generations. And thus we see this opinion is every way erroneous, and hath no shadow of reason in it, nor for it.

Seeing therefore both these opinions are to be refuted, let us in few words set down the true and orthodox judgment of the church, out of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. And it is this: That this holy man, by God's special favour to him, was assumed into heaven both body and soul; his soul being perfectly sanctified, and his body glorified in the instant of his translation; and there he remaineth in glory, expecting the general resurrection, and the full glorification of all God's elect.

Out of this translation of Enoch, we may learn:

1. First, that there is a life everlasting prepared of God for His children, wherein they shall live forever both in soul and body; for hereof hath God given us most evident testimonies, both here in Enoch and afterwards in Elias; Elias a Jew, Enoch none; Enoch in the first world, Elias in the second; Enoch before the flood, Elias after; Enoch uncircumcised, Elias circumcised; Enoch married, Elias unmarried: and both were assumed into heaven in soul and body, and are there to this day, and tarry for us till the end of the world; assuring us that our souls live forever, and that our bodies, though they die, shall rise again to life. Here therefore we have a notable ground for that last (but not least) article of our faith, where we profess to believe life everlasting.

2. Secondly, in this example we learn that God is not tied to the order of nature. The order which God established and set down concerning all men after Adam's fall is this: Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return (Gen. 3:19). By virtue of this decree, all men are to die, as sure as they once lived; and when that time appointed by God is come, all the world cannot save one man, but accordingly die he must. But here notwithstanding we see, God that tied man to this order is not tied Himself. Enoch and Elias are exempted, they die not, their bodies never turned to dust; such is the power of God over the order of nature, in all natural actions.

3. Thirdly, whereas the papists hold that all the fathers who died before Christ were in Limbus (a place out of heaven), and came not into heaven till Christ fetched them thence and carried them with Him at His ascension; here we learn that it is most false and forged. For here we see Enoch, and afterwards Elias, were in heaven both in body and soul, many hundred years before Christ's incarnation; whereby (as also by many other evidences that might be brought) it

is apparent that Limbus Patrum is nothing but a device of that heretical church of Rome.

II. Hitherto hath the Holy Ghost avouched the translation of Enoch. Now he proveth substantially that he was taken away.

Neither was he found for God had taken him away.

And for his proof he first layeth down his ground; then he thereupon frameth his argument, consisting in divers degrees of demonstration. The ground is the plain and evident testimony of the Old Testament in Genesis; where the words are these: Enoch was not found, or not seen, for God took him away (Gen. 5:24). Against this ground, being the very words of the Old Testament, no man can take exception. And here in a word, let us all mark the high and sovereign authority of God's Word, which even the Holy Ghost Himself vouchsafeth to allege for the confirmation of His own words. It had been sufficient that the Holy Ghost here affirmed Enoch to be taken away; but we see He proves it out of the Old Testament; so also did the apostles, and Christ Himself, all their doctrine.

Let this teach all men to give due reverence to the Holy Scriptures; let teachers allege them, let hearers receive them far above all human testimonies, seeing the Holy Ghost Himself vouchsafeth to confirm His own words by the authority thereof.

Secondly, having laid this ground, the Holy Ghost frames His argument, to prove that Enoch was taken away by faith; and it consisteth of many degrees of evidence.

III. For before he was taken away, he was reported of that he pleased God. But without faith, it is impossible to please God.

The degree of the argument are these:

1. God Himself took Enoch away.
2. Before he was taken away, he pleased God.
3. But without faith, no man can please God.

Therefore Enoch by faith was taken away.

1. The first degree, that Enoch was taken away, and was not found any more in this world hath been sufficiently spoken of already.
2. The second degree is, that before he was taken away, he pleased God: which is not barely affirmed, but it is further added that he was reported, or he received testimony, that he pleased God.

Now, this report or testimony is taken out of the story of Genesis, where it is affirmed of Enoch that he walked with God; which walking with God is an assured testimony the he pleased God; for (as the prophet Amos sayeth), Can two walk together unless they be agreed? (Amos 3:3). Therefore inasmuch as Enoch walked with God, it is proof sufficient that he pleased God; and because he pleased God, therefore God took him away. So that here are two distinct points in the second degree: First, that Enoch pleased God, Secondly, that there is a report or a testimony given of him that he did please God.

(i) In the first, let us observe these special points of instruction:

First, in that Enoch, before he was taken away, pleased God: let us learn that whosoever looks to have his soul translated into heaven at his death, and both body and soul at the resurrection, must beforehand in this life learn to please God; they must seek to please

God, not when the time of translation is come, but before, as here it is said Enoch did.

If any man demand, How shall I please God? My answer is this: Adam pleased God by keeping the Law; but now that is past, that power is lost. We must now please God by direction from the Gospel, namely, by faith in Christ and true repentance, together with a holy life (which must necessarily accompany true faith and repentance), thus God is pleased. And this must we not defer till our death, but do it in our lives. Nor can we look to be inheritors of the kingdom of glory as now Enoch is, unless beforehand we be in the kingdom of grace, by pleasing God as Enoch did. It is lamentable to see men not care for salvation till death, and then they begin to please God, but alas, God will not be so pleased. They begin to learn how to please God, when they have so long displeased Him, as there is then fear they can never please Him; but that man liveth and dieth with comfort, of whom it may be said, as here of Enoch, before he was taken away, he pleased God.

Again, whereas he came not in heaven till he pleased God; this discovers the madness of sinful men, who will look for heaven and yet will leave no sin, but flatter themselves therein. But let all impenitent men here take knowledge that they come not into heaven till they please God; let them therefore cease pleasing themselves, and their corruptions, by living in sin, and learn to please God by a holy life.

And further, in this point, mark how nothing brought Enoch to heaven but his pleasing of God. He was rich, for he was one of the greatest on the earth; he was royally descended, for he was the seventh from Adam in the blessed line; he was learned, for he had the six first Patriarchs to teach him, six such tutors as never man

had; and it is likely he had a comely, strong and active body. But see, all these brought him not to heaven; no, he pleased God, and was therefore taken away.

Let this teach us not to rest in wealth, beauty, strength, honour, human learning, nor all these put together, without the fear of God; for some of them may please thyself, and some may please other men; but God must be pleased before thou come into heaven, if thou wert as good as Enoch. Therefore unto all thy outward blessings add this: To please God by faith and repentance. Then as thy pleasing of men may make thee happy in this world, so thy pleasing of God shall translate thee from earth to heaven.

Thus we see, Enoch, before he was translated, pleased God.

(ii) Secondly, as he pleased God, and else could not have been translated; so it is added that he was so reported of, or there was such a testimony of him. That proof or testimony is here concealed, but it is recorded in the story of Genesis where it is said, Enoch walked with God; which as we heard before, was an assured testimony that God was well pleased with him.

But what is this, he walked with God; how can a man be said to walk with God? The meaning is that Enoch lived a godly, righteous and innocent life in this world; for to live in holiness and righteousness is to walk with God. And further, his heart was possessed of two persuasions or resolutions, which were the inducements drawing him to this holy life.

First, that he was always in God's presence, and that God is always ready to dispose of all things to his good.

Again, that God did see, try and discern all his words and deeds, yea, his cogitations and thoughts, and the whole course of his life. These were the holy resolutions of Enoch, and these made him lead an holy life.

This lesson is worth learning, and this example worthy to be followed of us all. Our duty is with Enoch, to walk with God in this life, if we purpose to live with God in heaven. And we walk with God by leading holy and unblameable lives, in holiness towards God, and righteousness towards man. But if we think this hard to do, we must labour to be resolved on these grounds: First, that God and His providence is ever present with us, to dispose of us always to His glory, and of all other things to our good. Secondly, that as we are in God's presence, so God seeth us, and all our thoughts, words and works, bargains and dealings, and will judge them all.

When these two persuasions possess our hearts, it cannot be but that we shall live godly, and fear to offend God; for as a child is dutiful and obedient in his father's presence, so when a man is persuaded he is in God's presence, it cannot but make him dutiful. When a man is persuaded that God seeth him, he will take heed what he doth; and that God heareth him, he will temper his tongue; and that God beholdeth all his dealings in the world, he will take heed how he borroweth, lendeth, buyeth or selleth, and what he doth in all his actions; and the very cause of all carelessness in these and all other duties in the world is because men are persuaded that God seeth them not.

To urge us therefore to this excellent duty, we have:

(1). First, God's commandment: Walk before me and be upright, saith God to Abraham (Gen. 17:1), and in him to all the children of his faith.

(2). Again, we have the examples of God's children, who are renowned for the obedience of this commandment; Enoch here, after him Abraham, and after him David, who testifieth of himself, I will walk before God in the land of the living (Psa. 116:9).

(3). Thirdly, as it is both commanded by precept, and practiced by example; so the proof of it is most comfortable to all that practice it; for it will make them prosper in all they go about. For, as he that is always in the king's presence and company, cannot but be in his favour, and therefore cannot but succeed well in all his affairs; so he that walks with God, cannot but prosper in whatsoever he sets his heart and hand unto. Blessed Abraham found this most true, when he assured his servant whom he sent to provide Isaac a wife, in a long and doubtful and dangerous journey. The Lord before whom I walk shall send his angel with thee, and prosper thy journey (Gen. 24:40); and even so may every child of God say with confidence: The Lord before whom I walk will send his angel with me, and prosper me in my proceedings.

(4). Fourthly, this walking with God is a good means to make a man bear the cross with patience. For if he be persuaded that God seeth how wrongfully he is persecuted or oppressed, and that God's providence is always present so as no affliction can come unto him but by His appointment; and again that His providence disposeth of all things to his good, how can he but receive with patience that portion of afflictions which God shall lay upon him? For as he that walks with the king, who dare offer him wrong? So, he that walks with God, what evil can touch him? This is Joseph's argument to his brethren when they were discomfited and feared he would punish them after their father's death: Fear not (saith he), for am not I under God? (Gen. 50:19). As though he had said, Do not I walk in God's presence and acknowledge myself under His power? And that

God, when you thought evil against me, disposed it to good. Where the ground of Joseph's reason is that he walked with God, his afflictions turned to his good.

(5). Lastly, this is a means to bring a man to make conscience of all sin, in thought, word and deed, and in all his dealings, when he persuades himself to walk in the presence of God. When Joseph was allured to sin by his mistress, his answer was, How shall I commit this great wickedness, and to sin against God? (Gen 39:9). The bridle that restrained him was the fear of that God in whose presence he walked; and because he walked with God, he would not walk with her in her wicked way; and because he kept a holy company with God, therefore he would not keep her company, nor be allured by her temptations.

So then seeing this way of walking with God is every way excellent and so profitable, let us learn it not in judgment and knowledge only, to be able to talk of it (which is soon learned); but in conscience and practice (as dutiful children do before their parents, so) let us in an heavenly awe and child-like reverence walk before God, labouring for a true persuasion of His presence and providence, to be always over us and our whole lives. The want hereof is the cause of all sin, and if we do thus walk with God and so please Him, as Enoch here did, then shall we be sure (though not after the same manner that Enoch was, yet) in soul first, and afterward in soul and body both, to be translated into eternal life. But if we will not walk this way with Enoch in this life, let us never look to live in heaven with him; but assure ourselves that as the way of holiness is the way to glory, so the way of wickedness is the way to eternal perdition. And thus much of the second degree.

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“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” Hebrews 11:6

3. But without faith it is impossible to please God.

These words contain the third degree, or the third part of the reason. And this degree consists of a general maxim or canon of divinity, and the Holy Ghost first layeth it down, and then, because it is one of the weightiest principles in religion, he proveth it substantially in the words following.

I. Canon.

In the canon itself, let us first examine the meaning, and then unfold the manifold use of it.

(i) Meaning.

Without faith.

By faith is meant here the same faith as before; true saving faith in the Messiah. And without this saving faith:

It is impossible to please God.

Impossible. How? Not in regard of the absolute, infinite and indeterminable power of God, which hath no limits but his own will; but in regard of that order of the causes and means of salvation set down by God in His Word, which is this:

1. Man by sin hath displeased God.

2. God must be pleased again, else a man cannot be saved.

3. He that will please God must please Him in Christ the Mediator, else he cannot; therefore he that will please God and be saved, must need believe in Christ. And thus by this order it is impossible. We deny not, but in regards of God's absolute power, he could save a man without faith; as He can lighten the world without the sun. But as (if He keeps that order of nature, which His own wisdom hath appointed), it is impossible to give light to the world without the sun; so if He keep that order for salvation which His own justice hath appointed, it is impossible to please God without faith in Christ. So then the meaning is laid down; and now appears the strength and force of the Holy Ghost's argument:

He that will be saved and come to heaven must first please God. But without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore without faith no man can be saved nor come into heaven; and by consequence therefore, Enoch being taken into heaven, needs be taken away by faith.

(ii) Use.

Now the use of this canon, rightly understood, is manifold and of great profit.

(1). First, here we learn that faith is simply and absolutely necessary to salvation, and most necessary of all other gifts and graces of God whatsoever. And though many be required, yet amongst all holy graces this is the principal, and more necessary in some respects than any other. For howsoever hope and love and zeal and many other graces of God are required to make the state of a Christian complete; and though they all have their several commendations in the Word; yet of none of them all is it said in the whole Scripture, as it is here of faith, that without it, it is impossible to please God. And no marvel, for it is the root and ground of all other graces, and gives

them their life and being; for therefore doth a man fear God, therefore doth he love God, therefore is he zealous for God's glory, because he believeth that God loveth him in Christ the Redeemer.

Now then, if faith be thus necessary, then it followeth that those that live in ignorance, and so have no sound faith but a foolish presumption, are in a miserable case; for however they may flatter themselves with conceits of their devotions and good meanings and good intents; it is faith with which they must please God, and nothing can without it. It stands them therefore in hand to lay off ignorance and presumption, and labour for a sound and saving faith; and that will bring them to the favour of God.

And again, as for such as have received grace to believe, seeing faith is of such necessity, and that they having faith must needs have knowledge, they therefore must look and examine by their knowledge whether their faith be a sound faith or not; for herein many that have knowledge deceive themselves, and think they have true faith when they have not. Now if any man would know whether his faith be sound and saving or not, it is known by this: If it purifies the heart. For so saith St Peter, that God by faith did purify the hearts of the profane and filthy Gentiles (Acts 15:9). If then thy faith do not purify thy heart, and cleanse thy life, and cause thee to abound in good works, it is no sound nor saving faith; it is but a general faith, it is but an historical knowledge, and cannot save the soul. He therefore that upon examination of his heart and life findeth his faith to be such, let him not content himself, but turn his general faith into a saving faith, which in this world will purify his heart, and at the last day will save his soul. And this must every man the rather do, because what knowledge, or what other gifts of God soever any man hath, without faith in Christ all are nothing; for it is faith that

seasoneth them all, and makes both them and the person himself to please God.

(2). Secondly, if it be impossible without faith to please God, then here we see the fond and foolish hypocrisy of the world, who will please God by other means; some think if they be glorious in the world, either for their wealth or their wit or their honour or their authority or their learning, they presently bring themselves into a fools paradise; and because the world makes account of them, and they please themselves, therefore they think it certain they must needs please God. But alas, though all the world admire them, and they be never so far in love with themselves, He that sits in heaven laughs them to scorn (Psa. 2:4). For, not all the pomp and glory, nor all the millions and mountains of gold in the world can please the Lord for one of the least of their many thousand sins wherewith they have provoked him. Let these men ask Nebuchadnezzar if his pompous pride; or Ahithophel if his active head and crafty wit; or Absalom if his golden locks; or Jezabel if her painted face and courtly attire; or Nabal if his flocks of sheep; or the philosophers if their natural learning: if all of these or any of these did ever please God. Nay, alas, they have all found and felt that without faith, it is impossible to please God.

(3). Thirdly, it is the opinion, not of the Turk alone in his Alcoran, but of many others as well, that every man shall be saved by his own religion if he be devout therein; be he Turk, Jew or Christian, Papist or Protestant. But this is a ground and rule of Atheism, and appears here to be most false; for there is no salvation without pleasing of God, and without faith it is impossible to please God. Therefore no religion can save a man but that which teacheth a man rightly to believe in Christ, and consequently to please God. But every religion teacheth not to believe in Christ; some not at all, and some not

aright; and therefore it is impossible for such a religion to save a man. Again, be a man what he can be, unless he be within the covenant of grace, he cannot be saved; but he cannot be within the covenant but by faith, therefore no man can be saved by any means but by true faith; not in any religion, but that which teacheth true faith.

Here therefore not only Turks and Jews are excluded, but this also sheweth many papists and many carnal gospellers in our church, how short they come of that religion which must save their souls. For this is the conceit of the most men, that if they do some good works, which carry a fair shew to the world, as liberality to learning, or charm to the poor; straight [away] they think they have leave to live as they list, and God is bound to forgive their sins, and to give them heaven; and this they imagine, though they know not what it is to believe in Christ or to repent of their sins. One of this religion came to the prophet Micah in his days, and asked him this question (uttering that plainly which all such men think in their hearts): Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil? (Micah 6:6,7). But the prophet answers him, shewing him his folly and how little God doth regard such works without a contrite heart; He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee. Surely to do justly, to love mercy, to humble thyself and to walk with thy God (v.8). Mark how that answer fits this example of Enoch. He pleased God, he walked with God, and was taken away. So answereth the prophet, if thou would please thy God and come to heaven by His favour, never stand upon thousands of rams and rivers of oil, upon thy gay and glorious works; but humble thyself, and walk with thy God. No walking with God (saith Micah), no pleasing of God; what is it but all one as if he had said, without faith it is impossible to please God? Here then is no

disallowance of good works, but of works without faith and true repentance; which though they be never so fair and flourishing, yet it is impossible that without faith they should please God.

Hereby it is also manifest that all the virtues of the heathen, and the works of such men who either know not Christ or, knowing Him, acknowledge Him not their only Saviour or, acknowledging Him, do not truly believe in Him with such a faith as purifieth the heart; are nothing else but, as the fathers called them, splendida peccare, gilded and glittering dross, and beautiful deformities. And howsoever this seems harsh, yet it must needs be true seeing, without faith it is impossible to please God.

And here also the vanity of some popish writers appears, who presumptuously make some philosophers saints; whereas they should first have shewed that they believed in Christ; and then we would believe and teach it as willingly as they. But else, if they had all the learning and all the moral virtues in the world, this must stand for a truth: Without faith, it is impossible to please God.

(4). Lastly, here we learn that the Word of God registered in the Holy Scriptures, doth contain in it sufficient direction for all the actions and duties of a man's life; for without faith, no man can please God. And if no man, then no man's actions can please God which are not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

If therefore men's actions must proceed from faith, then consequently must they have their ground and warrant from the Word; for faith and the Word are relatives, and the one depends upon the other. No faith, no word to bind; no word, no faith to believe. But all actions that please God must be done in faith, therefore all actions that please God have some ground and direction in the Word of God, without which Word of God there can be no

faith. And this is true not only in holy actions, but even in the common actions of men's lives and lawful callings. This is a principle which we must firmly believe and receive. And besides this argument here, it is also proved by the evident testimonies of the Holy Ghost. St. Paul to Timothy, All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable to teach, improve, correct and instruct in righteousness, that the man of God may be absolute, and made perfect unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16,17). How can the sufficiency of Scripture be more sufficiently in words expressed? Again, Every creature and ordinance of God is good, for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:4,5). Now if the Scripture makes a Christian perfect in all good works, how can it be but to give him sufficient direction for all his works? And if every action be sanctified by the Word, how can that be but the Word hath warrant and direction for every action and duty which may fallout in the course of a Christian life? And upon these grounds we have good reason to be resolved of this truth.

But now if any man ask how this can be, for the Scriptures were written long ago, and the stories are of particular men, nations and times, and the Commandments are known to be but ten; how then can the Scriptures yield sufficient directions for every man's particular actions? I answer, the Scripture gives directions for all actions in two ways: either by rules or by examples.

1, Rules. Rules are of two sorts, general or particular.

Particular rules for particular callings are many: For kings, they must read God's book and not have many wives nor gather too much silver and gold; They must be wise and learned and kiss the Son of God, Christ Jesus, and many other. For ministers, they must be apt to teach, watching, sober, not young scholars, and many other. And so

consequently, the most of the callings that are in the commonwealth have their particular directions in plain rules.

General rules are first the Ten Commandments, which are directions for all sorts of men in all times, what to be done, what not to be done in all actions towards God and men; and besides in the New Testament there are some few rules which are general directions for all men in all ages, such as: Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you the same unto them (Matt. 7:12). Again, Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Again, Let all things be done to edification, and without offence of thy brother (Rom. 15:2). Again, Let your works be done in love (Eph. 5:2). Lastly, Let no man seek his own (alone), but every man another's wealth (1 Cor. 10:24). Now, there is no action in the world, nor any duty to be done of a Christian man, be he a public or a private person, be it public or private action, be it towards God or man; but if he have not a particular direction, yet it falls within the compass of some of these rules; and by the tenor of some of these he may frame his work in such manner as shall be pleasing to God and comfortable to himself.

2. Examples.

Secondly, besides rules, there are examples, which are special directions; and they are either of God or good men.

(1). God.

Extraordinary examples of God, namely such as He did in extraordinary times, or upon extraordinary occasions, they concern us not; for these He did by the power and prerogative of the Godhead; as bidding Abraham to sacrifice his son, bidding the Israelites spoil the Egyptians, and such like. But the ordinary works

of God's wisdom in His creatures, of His justice towards sinners, of His mercy towards His children, or His care and providence towards all, are excellent rules of direction for us. Hence we have these rules: Be ye holy, for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:16); Be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful (Luke 6:36).

So for the actions of Christ, who was God and man; the miraculous actions of His power which argued His Godhead, as His walking on the water and such like, are no directions to us. Nor, again, His actions and works done as He was Mediator, as His fasting forty days, His passion and His merits; these are no directions for us to do the like. But, as the first give us instruction, so these procure us justification. But the third sort of His actions done by Him as a man, or as a Jew born, they are both our instruction and imitation, and they are good directions for our actions; as His obedience, His zeal, His patience, His humility, and all other virtues. Concerning all which He saith unto us: Learn of me for I am humble and lowly (Matt. 11:29). And again, when He had washed His apostles' feet, He bade them learn of Him to love one another, for, saith He, I have given you an example that ye should do even as I have done unto you (John 13:15), These His examples are rules of direction to all men in the like case.

(2). Good men.

Now as for the examples of men, as the examples of wicked men are every way to be eschewed, so good men are to be followed; for whatsoever is written is written for our learning (Rom. 15:4). And so for them we are to know that their examples or actions, contrary to the Word, are therefore to be avoided, because they be contrary; as Noah's drunkenness, Lot's incest, David's adultery; and many others his infirmities, and such like. Such as are directly agreeable with the

Word of God are to be embraced and received as direction for our lives, not for their own sake, but because they are agreeable to the Word. But as for such as are neither commanded nor forbidden, and being done were neither allowed nor disallowed; these being done by godly men and such who for their faith were approved of God, against which no exception can be taken in the Word, they be as rules and directions for us in the like cases.

Now there is no action that can fall out in the life of a Christian man for which he hath not out of the Scripture either a rule, general or particular, or else some example to follow, which is as good as a rule unto him. And thus we see how the Scripture affords direction for all our actions. In the demonstration whereof we have stood the longer, because it is a principle of great moment. The use hereof is double:

First we must therefore in all the actions of our lives and callings take consultation with the Word of God, and for our direction therein, we must search for either general or particular rules, or at least for examples of godly men in like cases. And without the warrant and direction of some of these, we are by no means to enter into anything, or to do any work. If we do, then we cannot clear ourselves from sin in so doing; for we sin because we please not God in doing that action. We please not God because we have no faith for the doing of it. We have no faith because we have no warrant nor ground in the Word for it. Therefore whatever a man presumeth to do, without some warrant in the Word for his direction, he sins in so doing.

Secondly, here ministers must learn their duty; for if no action can possibly please God that is done without faith, nor can be done in faith without warrant from the Word, then must they be God's mouth unto the people, to be able to tell them what is lawful and

what is unlawful by the Word; that so their people may perform their actions in faith, and consequently please God.

II. Proof of the canon.

Now having laid down this rule, because it is a principle of so great moment, the Holy Ghost in the next words proceeds to the proof of it:

For he that cometh to God must believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that fear Him.

These words are a proof of the former rule, and the reason stands thus:

He that cometh to God must needs believe. But he that pleaseth God cometh to God. Therefore he that pleaseth God must needs believe; and so, without faith it is impossible to please God.

He that cometh to God.

To come to God in the Scriptures, but especially in this example, is to labour to have fellowship with God in Christ; as is manifest in three places more: In the fourth chapter we are bid (v.16) to come boldly to the throne of grace; and in the seventh, God is said (v.25) to be able perfectly to save them that come unto God by Him; and in the tenth, we are called (v.22) to draw near with a true heart in assurance of faith. Out of all which places it appears that to come to God is to have fellowship with God by Christ. And the reason why that phrase is often used to the Hebrews is, for that many of them having received the profession of Christ, afterward forsook Him again, and fell from His religion, and by renouncing Christ fell away from God. Therefore He exhorted them to take heed lest there be in any of them an evil

heart, and unfaithful to depart from the living God (Heb. 3:12). Now, by the contrary, if to renounce Christ is to fall or go away from God, then we may gather that to come to God is to cleave to Christ, and to God by Christ. So then, the meaning is, He that will have any fellowship with God in Christ, he must believe.

What must he believe? Two things:

That God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek Him.

1. He must first believe that God is:

That is, not so much that there is a God, for that we are taught by the very light of nature; but that this God, whom in Christ he labours to know and come near, is the true and only God.

This is a notable point in Christian religion to believe, that God is God indeed; not a fiction, a shadow or imaginary God, but God indeed; for it is the scope of the first Commandment that God gave mankind.

If any man object, there is no man that knows God but confesseth God to be God. No man was so mad as ever to think otherwise. I answer, to believe the true God to be God indeed is a matter of great difficulty. For though a man by nature think there is a God, yet do we not by nature think the true God to be God. Nay, by nature every man is an atheist, and denieth in his heart the true God to be God, and doth impugn the first Commandment above all others. And this may truly and safely be affirmed of all men that ever came of Adam (Christ alone excepted) that by nature they are atheists; and it may be proved thus:

By nature, though, we know and believe there is a God, yet the corruption of our nature is such that we frame and fain Him to ourselves to be such a one as we please; for we deny in our hearts His power, His presence and His justice. But to take away these three from Him is to deny the true God to be God indeed.

First, men by nature deny God's presence; for men would be ashamed to do many things in the presence of any man, even the basest in the world which, when they are out of men's sights and yet in God's presence, they commit carelessly and boldly. I speak not of natural affections, which are lawful; and yet in many whereof there is none so great shame as men naturally refuse to do them before others; but I mean sinful affections, which not for any natural unseemliness, but even for their foulness and ugliness, because they are heinous sins, men would fear to do if any man were present. Seeing then men fear not, nor shame not to do them though they be in God's presence; it followeth, how therefore they naturally imagine, that God would be present; for if they were so persuaded, they would not commit them, though they esteemed God no better than a man.

Secondly, men by nature deny God's power thus: When a man offends a magistrate by breaking any law which may deserve death, or some great punishment, he is sore afraid; and all his care is how he may escape his punishing hand. But let a man offend God neversomuch by breaking carelessly all His holy Commandments, he never fears at all, nor trembles at the punishment belonging unto them. How can this be? But that howsoever he grants there is a God, yet he is not persuaded that God hath power to revenge the contempt of His laws, and therefore he never fears nor shrinks at the remembrance of Him, nor flieth at all from His revenging hand, but ploddeth on in sin without fear.

Thirdly, man by nature denies God's justice, for the justice of God is to wink at sin in no man, but to condemn and punish it wheresoever He finds it, by inflicting the curses of the law upon it. But man denieth this justice; for though he sin against God's law, and his conscience tell him of it; yet he persuades himself that there is no curse or punishment due for it, or at least that he shall escape it; nay, though he see never so many before him punished for the same sin (yet our nature is so blind and so corrupt), he thinks for all that, it shall not light on him. And it is lamentable, yet most true, that the god of the ignorant men is a mere idol, a god made all of mercy, and which hath no justice in him at all, and their sins they carelessly lay all on Christ, and say God is merciful, and in this conceit they care not how ignorantly, how loosely, how profanely they live; and their hearts never have a reverent and awful thought of the justice of God.

These are the pitiful imaginations that all men by nature have of God. All these may be proved by evident Scripture: The first in the psalm where David brings in the wicked, saying to themselves, God hath forgotten, He hides His face, He will not regard (Psa. 10:11). The second, by the blasphemy of Rabshakeh, who uttered with his tongue that which all men's hearts think by nature, What god can deliver you out of my hands? (2 Kin. 18:35). The third, Isaiah proves apparently, where he tells us that the wicked say, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are in agreement; though a scourge run over, and pass through, it shall not come at us (Isa. 28:15).

Thus both Scripture and plain demonstrations prove this to be true, that every man by nature denieth God's presence, power and justice; and therefore is by nature a plain atheist, not believing that God is

God indeed. Now furthermore, there are four sorts of people that put in practice this atheism:

(1). First, such as are not ashamed to say openly, Is there a God or no? and there dispute the question, and at last avouch there is none; but that all matters concerning God and His worship are nothing but devices of politick men to keep simple men in awe, and to make fools fain; but these themselves are fools of all fools, and the devil devised that impious conceit to keep them in miserable blindness. There have been such fools in all ages, yet in old time David saith: These fools did but say in their hearts; but now the fools of these last and rotten ages are ripe in their folly, and they dare say with there mouths, There is no God (Psa. 14:1). These are monsters in nature, and devils incarnate, worse than the devil himself; for he in judgment never was an atheist. These are to be marked and hated worse than toads and adders; and if such a one can be convicted by any lawful evidence, if ever heretic or traitor deserved death, such a one deserves ten deaths; as being a traitor to God, to mankind and to nature herself. And though these wretches say, There is no God, yet make they a god of themselves, sacrificing all their affections to their pleasure and their profit.

(2). The second sort are such as acknowledge and worship a god, but a false god. These have been in all countries and most ages, as histories do shew; some worshipping the sun, some the moon, some stars, some beasts, birds, fishes; some dead idols of wood or stone or metal. And of this sort, and no better, are some in these churches where the true God is worshipped; the apostle saith, Covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5); for if a man's heart be set wholly on riches, then the wedge of gold is his god. And to others, whose affections are all on pleasure, their belly is their god (Phil. 3:19). Let these men hold in judgment as they can, their practice I am sure proclaims atheism.

(3). The third sort are such as acknowledge and worship the true God, but in a false manner; and of these there are three principal sorts: First, Turks; secondly, Jews; who hold the true God but deny the trinity of persons and the deity of Christ. Thirdly, the true papist holds in word one God and the trinity of persons as we do, but look at their doctrine, and (if their words have any natural meaning) they deny it; for if the Second person be true Christ, then hath He two natures, Godhead and manhood; but by their famed transubstantiation they quite take away the truth of the manhood. And again, Christ hath three offices, He is the true King, Priest and Prophet of His church; and if He be not so, He is not Christ; but the papist's doctrine in plain words and necessary consequence denieth them all, as hath been often proved unto their shame, and published to the world; and they never yet to this day could or durst answer it; for if they do, they shall soon either hear us again, or else we will recant it. But till then it appears that their god is by their doctrine not the true God, but an idol; for he that denieth the Son, denieth the Father also, as saith St. John (1 John 2:23).

(4). The fourth sort of atheists are such as acknowledge and worship the true God, and worship Him in true manner, for the outward worship; but in their lives and deeds deny Him. And these are not to be sought for in Turkey or Jewry or Italy, for all churches are full of such Protestant atheists. Italy may have more atheists in judgment than we, but these hypocrites and atheists in life are here also; those tares we have amongst our corn. Of these speaks the apostle that they profess to know God, but dent Him in their works (Tit. 1:16). Let this seem no wonder that such men be called atheists, for the apostle saith plainly, He that careth not for his family, is worse than an infidel (1 Tim. 5:8); whereby it appears that a man may be a professor of the gospel, or a Christian in profession, and an infidel or

atheist in his practice; and it is certain, let any man profess what he will, if his life be nought, his religion is a false religion in him.

Now then, to shut up this point with the use thereof; If this be true, that there are so many sorts of atheists that almost the world is full, and that we are all so by nature; then, first, let us see how hard a matter it is to believe in God aright; and if no man come to God but he that believeth God aright, then we see it is no marvel that so few come to God. Let us therefore go to God by earnest prayer, to give us His Spirit to work true faith in our hearts, and to make us of a true belief. And, secondly, seeing men may be Christians in profession and atheists in practice, let us all look narrowly to ourselves, and join with our profession conscience and obedience; for else the more we know God, the worse we are. It may please God after to give us better minds, but as yet we are no better than deniers of God; and though we come near God in profession and in His outward service, yet indeed we are far from Him, because we want that true faith which must profess God not in judgment alone but in practice; and that will bring us near unto God, for he that cometh unto God must believe that God is. And thus much for the first thing to be believed by him that will come to God and please Him.

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2. The second is,

And that he is a rewarder of them that seek Him.

It is a notable sentence, and one of the most comfortable in the book of God; and contains the second thing to be believed. The parts are naturally two:

I. How a man doth seek God.

II. How God rewards them that seek Him.

I. For the first, a man truly seeketh God by doing four actions:

(1). First, a man must forsake himself, go out of himself, and as it were lose himself in his own judgment, when he intends to seek God. If any ask, How may that be? I answer thus: A man must labour to see his sins fully and distinctly, and in sight thereof be cast down in himself, as a man is when he seeth his debts; then let him look into himself, and see if he can find in himself any ability to pay those debts, or any means in the world to satisfy God's justice and purchase pardon. And if upon due examination he find none at all, no not the least, nor anything in himself but an accusing and raging conscience; let him then fall out of all love with himself, nay, hate and abhor himself and his own baseness; and lastly, let him despair of his own salvation in or from himself; and thus doing he forsakes himself, denieth himself, and even loseth himself. And thus necessarily must he do to himself, that will set his heart to seek the Lord. For God will be found of none that hope to find help at any hand but his; they therefore that seek God but will seek themselves too, do justly lose both God and themselves.

(2). Secondly, he that will seek God aright (when he hath lost himself) must hunger in his heart and soul, not after wealth and honours, ease or pleasures; but after the favour and mercy of God in Christ for the forgiveness of his sins; and one drop of Christ's blood to wash away the guilt and stain of his defiled and sinful soul, must be dearer to him than all the pomp and glory of ten worlds. Look how a hungry soul hungers after meat, and a fainting soul thirsteth after drink; so must his soul hunger after God's mercy, and thirst for Christ's blood; and these are necessary, for as a man that undertakes a long journey must be provided of meat and drink, so he that

undertakes the journey to go seek the Lord, must have this provision for the diet of his poor soul: God's mercies and Christ's merits. And he that seeks without a soul hungering after these, may seek long and find nothing.

(3). Thirdly, if he will truly seek God, he must not go in every path, but take the true and living way which Christ hath consecrated by His blood. Nor take any guide, but trust to Christ's Spirit alone to be his guide. Nor make many mediators or messengers to God, but make Christ alone to God the Father. We must therefore go to Him and yield up ourselves to be taught and guided by Him and leave our suit to be preferred by Him. We must not look to come to God by running on pilgrimages to this or that saint's picture or bones; or to our Lady of Loretto. Many have sought God in these, but who ever found Him? Nay, alas; thou mayest lodge in her forged tabernacle at Loretto all thy life, and lie in hell for all that when thou art dead; and mayest kiss all the saints' pictures and bones and hair, and all their relics in Spain and Italy, and all cannot get thee one sight of God's favourable countenance. Nor again must we look to come to God by our good works, though we are to do them; they are good marks in the way, and good evidences of a right way, but they cannot open heaven and let thee in. And therefore, when thou hast done all thou canst, thou must forsake them all in matter of justification and coming to God. Only thou must go to God by Christ, and cleave to Him alone. He is the door, the way, the truth, the life; and certainly, never man found God that sought Him not in Christ alone. And when popish devices and distinctions have done all they can, men will be found liars, and Christ to speak the truth, saying, No man cometh to the Father but by me (John 14:6).

(4). Lastly, when all these are done, then must thou believe that God is become thy merciful Father in Christ, and is reconciled unto thee

in Him; for there is no fear, but if thou seek God in Christ, thou shalt find Him; and when thou hast done the three former things, thou mayest safely and assuredly believe that thou hast truly sought God. And after all these, if thou have not sin and a lively faith, thou dost not seek God. For as it is impossible without faith to please God, so it is impossible without faith to find God. Thus if a man lose himself, long after God's mercy, take Christ alone for his guide and Mediator, and steadfastly believe his reconciliation with God by Christ, then he seeks God aright. And to this seeking belongs a reward and blessing. Now then, if this be to seek God, here is some light given to a great question, Whether the church of Rome be a true church, and their doctrine truly catholic, or erroneous and failing in fundamental points? For answer: Can that be a true church which doth not bring her children to seek God? Or that catholic doctrine which teacheth not her children to seek God the right way, but sends them into a thousand by-ways? Surely, if this be to seek God, then search all the popish doctors, and almost all their writers, and see whether a man be not taught to seek God quite in another walk. Which way of theirs, whether it ordinarily brings the seekers to God or no, we leave to God's merciful judgment. But for ourselves, as we see we have the true and living way, the sure and infallible way by Christ to God, by the Son to the Father; let us rejoice in the comfort of so rich a mercy, and be thankful to the Lord for revealing Himself unto us, and opening unto us the true way to Him and His glory. And thus much for the first point, how we must seek God.

II. The second is, how that He is a rewarder of them that seek Him. I answer, God rewards them that seek Him:

(1). First, by offering Himself graciously to be found of them that seek Him; for He never hides Himself, nor turns away from the soul that seeketh Him; but rather turns to him and meets him that comes

to Him. He is that good Father which saw the prodigal son afar off, and met him and received him (Luke 15). Yea, rather it is true that He is found of them that sought Him not (Isa. 65:1), than ever sought by any that found Him not. And hereby God much magnifieth His grace and mercy to mankind, in being so assuredly found when men seek Him. For in this world it is not so; All men seek the face of the Prince, saith Solomon; true, but all men find it not. No, access to great men is not so easy. They and their favour are so enclosed that men may long seek before they find either them or it; but God here is not so enclosed as He will not be seen or spoken to; He is found of them that seek Him. And as hereby He honoureth Himself, so He highly rewardeth His servants; for there is no greater contentment to a subject than to perceive his service pleaseth his Prince, nor greater joy than to find His gracious favour when they seek it.

Let then this practice of the great God of heaven, first of all, teach the great ones of this world to be willing to be found when they are sought unto; thereby they shall honour themselves, and cheer up the hearts of their people who seek unto them. And again, it may be a rich comfort to the poor ones of this earth, who, when they see they must long look, and wait, and pray, and pay, and seek the favour and grace of great men, and cannot find; may then remember yet they have a God who will not shut the door upon them, will not turn away, will not keep secret, will not fear them away with a rough answer, or a sour look, but hath this honourable and princely grace, He will be found of them that seek Him.

(2). Secondly, He rewardeth them that seek Him by bestowing His love and favour on them; not only He, but His favour shall be found of all that seek Him. It is God's favour that God's children seek, and His favour they shall be sure to find. This is no small reward unto them, for in this world a man thinks he hath enough if he hath the

Prince's favour; and therefore it was the common phrase in old time, Let me find grace or favour in the eyes of my Lord the king. So speak God's children unto the Lord. It is not wealth, nor honours we seek for at God's hand, but let us find favour in the eyes of the Lord our God; and so they do, whatever they find in this world.

(3). Thirdly, He rewardeth them not with His naked favour, but with the most gracious testimonies thereof that can be; which are two: Forgiveness of their sins and eternal life and glory with Himself. This is all a Prince can do to His subject who hath offended Him; to forgive him the fault and remit the punishment, and to advance him to honour. This doth the Lord to all that seek Him. He forgives them the debt they owe Him, whereby life, and soul, and all was forfeited to Him, and gives them also life everlasting. So plentiful a reward is given them from their God, under whose wings they are come to trust.

(4). Fourthly, He rewardeth them with the beginnings of heaven and happiness, even in this world: A good conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost; the comfort whereof is more, even in the bitterest affliction, than all the pleasures and contentments in the world.

(5). Lastly, with the appurtenances of heaven and of eternal life; namely, the good blessings of this life, a competent portion whereof God giveth His children in this world as tokens of His favour, and as rewards of their service and seeking Him.

Now as this place doth aim at all these rewards; so principally and directly the Holy Ghost meaneth eternal life; as though He had said, He that cometh to God must steadfastly believe that God is able and most willing to reward all that come to Him with a better reward than this world can yield, even with eternal life and glory for His Son's sake.

Objection: But then will some object; God rewardeth us, therefore we merit; therefore good works deserve.

I answer, this place indeed is grossly abused by the papists for that purpose; but we are to know that the truth is far otherwise; for God rewardeth men for two causes: 1. First, for His promise sake, and that is for His own sake, for it was His own goodness that made Him promise, and no former debt He owed to man. 2. Again, He rewardeth our good works, not for our merits (for they are nothing, but of death and curses), bur for Christ and His merits; for their worthiness are our good works rewarded. So then here are two causes of God's rewarding, and yet man's merits are neither or both; and so the argument is nought, that God rewardeth therefore we merit; for God doth it for other causes. Thus these spiders gather poison out of this flower, but let us suck the honey, for this notable sentence hath excellent use:

Uses.

(1). First, if God be a rewarder of them that seek Him, then not of them that seek Him not. Who seek not God? Wicked and ungodly men seek Him not, but rather seek to avoid Him and His service; this sentence therefore is heavy against them. For when they hear it, their conscience answereth: But we seek not God, therefore we can look for no reward from Him. Doest thou seek the world? Then must the world be thy rewarder. Doest thou seek to please thyself? Then must thou reward thyself. And if thou wilt please the devil by living in sin, then must he be thy paymaster. Alas, pitiful and fearful will these rewards be. Again, if God rewards none but them that seek Him, here appears the reason why so many papists die in our religion, and (with us) cleave to Christ's merits alone when they come to die; because their conscience then tells them that by their pilgrimages,

relics, will-worships, and many more of their courses (ordinary in popery) they did never seek God, but themselves and their own honour, gain and credit; and full well know they that there is no reward for such service; and therefore by their practice they make it a true saying, that it is good living a papist but dying a Protestant.

(2). Secondly, if God be a rewarder of them that seek Him, then we see that it is most true which the apostle sayeth, It is not in vain to serve God (1 Cor. 15:58), for God is a rewarder of them that seek and serve Him. Therefore the atheists and profane men of this world (who say it is vain to serve God, and what profit is there that we have kept His commandments?) are here convinced to be liars against the truth.

Then seeing it is so, let this admonish us all to seek and serve God in all truth and sincerity, knowing we serve Him who will regard it. Nothing more encourageth a man to serve his Lord and King than to see that his pains are regarded, and his service rewarded, nor more discourageth a man than the contrary. If therefore God did ever forget any that served Him, let us bestow service elsewhere, and think Him unworthy to be sought to; but if contrariwise, He never forgot, nor deceived, nor disappointed any that served Him, then is He most worthy to have the service both of our souls and bodies. David indeed once said, In vain have I cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocence (Psa. 73:13). But he was then in a strong temptation, as himself there confesseth; but afterwards when he went into the sanctuary of God and searched the truth of the matter, he confesseth he was deceived. And therefore as in the first verse he had acknowledged that God was good to Israel, so in the last he concludeth, that it is good for him to draw near unto God; and so though the temptation was very vehement, yet as faith appeared in the beginning, so it had victory in the end, and testified that God is

good to all that seek Him. Another time also (for he was a man of many sorrows and temptations) being in some great distress, his corruption so prevailed that he said, All men are liars (Psa. 116:11); whatsoever Samuel, or Gad, or Nathan and other prophets have told me of God's love, and mercies, and of His promises, and providence, and fatherly care; I see it is all false and nothing so. Now surely if David, or all the kings in the world can prove this, then God is not worthy to be sought after; but great men think they may say anything, especially when they are moved, as David here was. But when David entered into himself, and considered the words he had so presumptuously uttered; upon better advice he confesseth, and writes it up for all posterities to God's glory and his own shame, that it was in passion, I said in my fear, all men are liars. This he said in his haste, or in his fear; but upon advice in the next verse, he confesseth God's benefits were so many and so great to him, as he cannot tell what to render to the Lord for them. And in another place, he crieth out in admiration, O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, and put their trust in thee, even before the sons of men (Psa. 31:19).

We see then, that merciful promise of Christ is ever made good, Seek and ye shall find (Matt. 7:7). None ever sought God, but found. We may seek our own pleasures and live loosely, and be deceived, and hear that fearful question, What profit have ye of these things? (Rom. 6:21). What reward but shame and sorrow? But if we seek God aright, we never lose our labour. Let us therefore seek God, let the hand of our hearts knock at God's mercy gate in Christ, and we shall not go away without a reward. The prodigal child fled from his father, spent all, and lost his favour; but he no sooner said, I will return and humble myself to my father; but he found him, and won his father's favour again. So let us but offer ourselves to God (God

understandeth our thoughts long before), He will meet us, and receive us, and give us a reward.

(3). Thirdly, as God rewardeth them that seek Him, so of all that seek Him, none miss Him; all find that seek. Great ones have not access, and the poor kept out; but all receive as they come: no difference; but the more carefully any seek, the more welcome are they. Here let princes and great men learn their duties at God, by whose grace and permission they are what they are.

(i) First, let them think it unbeseeming their greatness, to let any serve them without a reward; and a stain to their honour, not to let well-deserving subjects find their favour. Let them not daunt their hearts by not regarding them, and their pains; but let them encourage them to serve them, by looking at them, by good countenances, and good speeches, and by rewarding every one according to his worth. All great men should esteem this, as one of the pearls of their crowns, to have it said of them, Such a one is a rewarder of them that serve him.

(ii) Again, let them learn to dispense their favour according to reason, and not affection only. God is indifferent and equal to all that serve Him. So let princes be; for that is true honour and justice to reward each one as he deserves. And that he may find the best, who doth best, this will make every one strive, who should be first, and forwardest, in all serviceable duties.

(iii) Further, this must teach them not to despise them that are under them in this world; for howsoever the state of this world requires that difference of persons, else it cannot stand; it is nothing so with God, nor in the world to come. For there, the subject, the servant, the poor man, may challenge his part in God's favour as well as the best; nay, whosoever seeketh the most carefully, shall find the best reward.

(iv) Moreover, here is a comfort to the poor, and the meaner sort of men, who are appointed by God to be underlings in this world. Seek they favour here and find it not? Work they here and do their duties, and are not rewarded? Let them learn to seek God, who will assuredly both regard what they do, and abundantly reward it.

(4). Fourthly, seeing God is a rewarder of them that seek Him, here is comfortable encouragement against two great impediments, which hinder many a man from serving God:

(i) First, to seek God is but a matter of mockery to profane men; for let a man set his face to Jerusalem, there are presently Samaritans, which for that cause will hate and mock him. Let a man set his heart to seek God, by hearing the Word more carefully, praying to God, instructing His family, or keeping the Sabbath more carefully than before; and forthwith he is the laughing stock, and the by-word to profane men. But, lo, here is comfort: The God whom thou seekest will reward thee, and that so richly that thou will think thyself well recompensed, both for thy service, and their mocks. In this world, men care not who think or speak evil of them, so the prince like them; and shall it not encourage us to seek God, though the world mock us, seeing so doing we please God, and so far doth please Him as He will highly reward us? Those therefore that fall from religion for those mockers, it appears they seek not to please God but men.

(ii) Secondly, for a man that is a magistrate or a minister, to do his duty carefully is the high way to undergo a burden of contempt and hatred; insomuch as many good men are afraid to be either magistrates or ministers; for, first, wicked men must needs hate them, because the one is to rebuke and the other to punish their faults. And again, even good men are too respectless of them that are in these places, and so the most part neither yield them that

reverence, nor reward, that is due unto them; but oftentimes a man for all his pains and care taken for church or commonwealth, is recompensed with hatred, envy, grudges, evil words, and slanderous reports. In this case, the comfort is this: that though a man be in the world neither regarded, nor rewarded, as his desert is, yet the Lord seeth what he doth, and is a plentiful rewarder of all that seek and serve Him; and therefore especially of them, who not only themselves serve Him in His chief places of service, but also do win many others to seek and serve God.

(5). Fifthly, if God be a rewarder of them that seek Him, then doubtless He is a revenger of them that hate Him; for He that can mightily reward His followers, can also mightily be revenged of His enemies. These two are the two parts of a king's power, to be able highly to advance his friends, and mightily to punish his enemies; therefore principally this belongs to the King of Kings. This sentence therefore is a thunderbolt of a most fearful threatening against all impenitent sinners; assuring them that if they persist to profane God's holy name by their careless sinning against Him, they shall be sure to find and feel Him a powerful revenger of them that hate Him. Thus He promiseth Himself (Deut. 32:40-42), I lift up my hand to heaven, and I say, I live for ever. If I whet my glistening sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will execute vengeance on my enemies, and reward them that hate me. Where also note how the same phrase is used; for here the apostle saith, God is a rewarder of them that seek Him. So in Deut. A rewarder of them that hate Him. If any object how these two can stand together; for a man had as good hate Him as seek Him, if the same reward belong to both; I answer, A reward, but not the same, belongs unto them. Thieves and murderers are justly rewarded when they die for their acts; and the king rewards a good servant, when he advances him to honour. They that seek God are rewarded with mercies and favours above their

desert; they that hate God are rewarded with vengeance and torments according to their desert; and this shall all wicked men, and enemies of God, be as sure to find as ever any that sought God obtained mercy.

But worldly men will say, we hate not God, we are no Jews nor Turks, we are christened and come to the church, according to the law, as good subjects do. I answer, Neither do Turks nor Jews hate God, if this be all; for they deny not the Godhead, but acknowledge it, and are circumcised and live more strictly in their devotions than most Christians. Here is therefore more required, or else we shall make them also good friends with God. But a man may hate God, and neither be Turk nor Jew; he may acknowledge Christ and the Trinity, and yet hate God. For, as Christ saith, He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth (Luke 11:23); so it is here; he that seeketh not, serveth not; and loveth not God, hateth God; for there is no man that can know God but must needs either for His mercies love Him, or else hate Him for His justice against sin and sinners. Again, Christ bids us, If you love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15). If then to keep God's commandments be a sign of one that loves God, it is a sign that one loves not God when he hath no care to keep them. By which two places it appears that whosoever makes not conscience of sin is God's enemy, and that God so reposes him; therefore let this fear every man from living carelessly in his sin, and drive him to true repentance; for else let him assure himself that God is not so plentiful a rewarder of them that seek Him, but he is as powerful a revenger upon those that hate Him.

(6). Lastly, if God be a rewarder of them that seek Him, we learn the great difference between God's service and the devil's. The devil's servants are fed with fair words but get nothing; the devil is able to

give them nothing; but God's servants (as we see here) are plentifully rewarded. God is a rewarder of them that seek Him; but the devil is a deceiver of them that serve him. But some will say, There is none so mad to be the devil's servants. I answer, He that doth any man's work, is either his servant or his slave; but every sinful, wicked man doth the devil's work, for sin is the devil's work; therefore all impenitent sinners are the devil's servants. It is Christ's argument to the Jews, You are of your father the devil, for the works of your father you will do; murders and lies are his works, you live in these sins, and do these works; therefore you are his servants (John 8:44).

Again, the Holy Ghost teacheth us that whosoever committeth sin (and liveth therein without repentance), the same is the servant of sin (John 8:34). Now sin is but the bawd or broker to the devil; they that are the servants of sin, sin prefers them to the devil, and so they become his servants. Therefore, whosoever becomes the servant of sin, is by that means the slave and servant of the devil also. Which, if it be true, it will fall out upon the reckoning, that the devil hath more servants in the world than God hath; which is so much the more lamentable inasmuch as he deludeth all his servants, and is not able to reward them, nor to give them any good thing.

But some will say, This is nothing so; for contrariwise, who have the honours, pleasures, and wealth of this life, who have heart's ease and the world at will, but such men? I answer, True, it is commonly so; but have they those from Satan? No, not the least of them all, but all is from God; for every man is God's child by creation, and some by grace. To every one of His children He ordains and gives a portion, but to His children by grace a double portion; both here, and in heaven. The wicked men, they will not fear nor serve Him; therefore they have no part nor portion in heaven, but here they have it; so saith David, there are some men, which are men of this world, and

have their portion in this life; these men's bellies God filleth with His hidden treasures, they and their children have enough, and leave the rest for their children after them (Psa. 17:14). Where it is manifest that wicked men have their parts and portions of God's blessings in this world, and that all their wealth and pleasures are granted them by and from God, as their portion; reserving the principal part of the portion of His children for a better life. Therefore, all the good things of this life which Dives received, and all the wicked men do receive in this life, are not any rewards of Satan, but gifts of God; so unworthy a master is the devil to serve. Indeed he will promise his poor slaves anything, but can perform nothing, but will lie unto them and deceive them. He told Christ confidently, when he let Him see the glory and greatness of this world, All this is mine and I give it to whom I will (Luke 4:6); but he was a liar from the beginning, and so he is here. He lied to the first Adam, and no marvel that he dare avouch so fond and loud a lie in the presence of the second Adam, Jesus Christ. He promised the first Adam to make him God, and here the second Adam to make him King and Lord of all the world, and the glory of it; but he performed both alike, he deceived the first, and so had the second also if He had trusted him. Nor did ever any trust him, but he deceived him (I mean even for the base things of this life); witness else all his witches (his most devoted and professed servants of all others) if ever he made any one of them wealthy; all ages are not able to shew one. Whereas, on the other side, there was never man that served God, but had a competent measure of comforts for this life (and some abundance) and yet all that is but the firstfruits and beginnings of that reward which is laid up for them in another world. Which being true, is it not a strange and lamentable case to see men (for all this) debase themselves to this base and slavish service of Satan, and to refuse this high and honourable service of almighty God? A common servant in this world hath more wit; he, if he can hear of a better service, a master who gives better

wages, and who better prefers his servants, will leave his old master, and make means to get the other. And shall not we be as wise both for soul and body as they for the body alone? Shall they leave a man for a man, and shall not we leave the devil for God?

Let us therefore abandon the base service of Satan, who neither can, nor will reward them that serve him; put away so ill a master who hath not so much as meat and drink to give us (for we have even that from God; but of his own, he hath nothing to give us, save in this world sorrow, and shame, and an ill conscience; and in the world to come, the torments of hell with himself); and let us all seek the blessed service of God. If we know not how to attain it, go to Christ by hearty confession of thy sins, and earnest prayer, and He will prefer thee to God His Father; for never was any denied, that with a good and true heart offered himself to God's service. The shall we feel and find what a blessed thing it is to be God's servant; of whom it was ever true, which the Holy Ghost here saith, and is and ever shall be, that He is an honourable rewarder of them that seek Him.

And thus we have (in some part) the measure and use of this notable sentence; wherein we have stood the longer, because it is one of the most excellent principles of all practical divinity.

Now, put all together, and we shall see how it proves Enoch to be taken away by faith, which is the first ground and the main matter of all this example, and of these two verses.

God is a rewarder of all His children that seek Him by faith; therefore it is faith by which God's children please God; and therefore holy Enoch, who was taken up by God from earth to heaven, both pleased God by faith, and by faith was taken away.

And thus much for the commendation of Enoch's faith, and consequently the examples of such as lived in the first world before the flood.

Now followeth the example of Noah, who lived in both worlds, both before and after the flood.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Hebrews 11:7.

In this verse is contained the third example, and the last in order of those who lived before the flood in the first and old world; namely, of the renowned patriarch Noah, the tenth from Adam.

Of whom, and whose faith, great and glorious things are spoken in this verse; and that in a high and excellent style, full of majesty and divine eloquence.

Concerning Noah’s faith, two points are laid down: A. first, the ground of his faith, and B. secondly, the commendation of it.

A. The ground of his faith was a special revelation from God in these words: Noah being warned of God. The things revealed whereof God warned him are laid down two ways: first, generally, to be things as yet not seen; then particularly three in number:

I. God’s judgment upon the sinful world, that He was purposed to destroy it by water.

II. God’s mercy on Noah, that he would save him and his family.

III. That He would save him by an ark, and therefore he must make one; and these be the things whereof Noah was warned of God.

B. His faith is commended by three worthy effects, or operations, in him:

I. It moved in him a reverence, or a reverent regard of the warning sent him from God.

II. It made him prepare the ark, of which ark there are set down two ends: (1) it saved his household, (2) it condemned the world.

III. It made him heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

This, I take it, is the true resolution of these words; and they contain many excellent things concerning his faith.

By faith, Noah, being warned of God of the things which were as yet not seen;

By faith, that is, by a general and historical faith, and also by a true and saving faith in the Messiah to come, Noah being warned of God of the just judgment He purposed to bring upon the world by a universal flood; and of His merciful providence to him and his family that He would save them by an ark (all which things were then to come, and therefore unseen), he believed these forewarnings of God; and therefore in reverence to this message from God, he prepared the ark, and thereby saved his household, and condemned the wicked world.

And so his faith, by all these, appearing to be a true and lively faith; did make him a just and righteous man in God's sight. This is the sum and substance of Noah's example. Let us speak of the several parts in order.

A. The first point is the ground of his faith, a warning, or an answer, from God. For, he being a righteous man in that wicked age, wherein all the world weltered in wickedness, and walking before God in great holiness, when no man cared for religion, he had this special

favour from God, that when He purposed to destroy the world for their sin, He first of all revealed to righteous Noah that purpose of His. So that these words have reference to the revelation which Noah had from God, in the sixth chapter of Genesis. For this message came not from God by any prophet (for we know none in those evil days, except Noah himself), but either by the ministry of an angel, or else by immediate revelation from God Himself; and this favour he received from God, not for any cause in the world, but because he was an holy and righteous man.

From hence, we may learn diverse excellent instructions:

I. First, whereas God maketh choice of Noah, to reveal unto him His counsel and His judgments to come, we learn that this is a prerogative which God bestowed on such as fear Him; He revealeth His counsels to them in a special manner, whether they be purposes of judgment upon His enemies, or of mercies unto his church. Thus dealt He with Abraham (Gen. 18:19), Shall I (saith God) hide from Abraham the thing that I will do? Which thing was the destruction of Sodom and her rulers. And so when the Sodomites lived in wanton carelessness, and put far from them the evil day, then Abraham knew from God their destruction was at hand. And as in that, so it is generally true in all His great works, that the Lord God will do nothing but He reveals His secrets to His servants the prophets (Amos 3:7). Now this is not a prerogative of prophets alone, or of such as were extraordinary men as Abraham was, but the secret of the Lord are amongst such as fear Him (Psa. 25:17). All that fear the holy name of God, are God's friends, and of His counsel; and therefore not Abraham only is called the friend of God (Jam. 2:23), but of all true believers, saith Christ (John 15:14,15), You are my friends, if you do what I command you; henceforth I call you not servants, but friends; for the servant knoweth not what his master

doth; but all things I have heard of my Father, have I made known unto you. As if He had said, I will communicate and impart my secrets unto you, as one friend doth unto another, as far as shall be fit for you to know. And the apostle saith (1 Cor. 2:15), A faithful and a holy man discerneth into the deep counsels of God; which are revealed unto them, as much as concerneth their salvation, and sometimes more; as here unto Noah, who was forewarned of God of things then not seen.

This prerogative of God's children is to be understood with some cautions:

(1). First, that this is more proper to prophets and holy ministers of God, than to ordinary Christians.

(2). Secondly, that it was more ordinary in the Old Testament than now in the days of the gospel. If any object that then the state of the church before Christ was better than it is now under Christ; I answer, Not so, for first, we are recompensed by having the Scriptures perfect and complete, which they had not; and by having the substance of their shadows and the performance of their promises; in which respect our state is far more excellent than theirs. And, secondly, for this particular, I answer, They indeed had more ordinary revelation of matters personal and private, and not directly touching salvation; but of such things as are general, and do necessarily concern salvation, we in the time of the New Testament have more evident demonstration, and more full revelation, than they had before Christ. For example: particular mercies to some faithful men, or particular judgments on God's enemies, whether particular men or whole kingdoms, were after revealed to godly men, in those days (as here to Noah), but salvation by the Messiah, and the manner how the

Messiah should save His church, is more filty and plainly revealed now, than in those days.

(3). Out of which consideration ariseth the third caution; which is, that revelations of God's will, to be expected now under the gospel, are ordinarily nothing else but these: the true meaning of Scripture, and a discerning of true Scripture from forged, of true Sacraments from supposed, of true doctrine from false, of true pastors from false prophets. These and such like, as far forth as they are necessary to salvation, all true and faithful believers (which out of an humbled heart, do seek it at God's hand) are sure to have revealed unto them from God. But as for other purposes of God, of personal and particular matters, or what shall be His blessings, or what His judgments to these and these men, families, cities or kingdoms; or when or how he will change states, or translate kingdoms; or by what extraordinary means He will have His gospel propagated, or a declining church or state upholden; these we are not to expect, nor easily to believe any that shall say that such things are revealed unto them. And yet we tie not the Lord in such strait bonds but that He may sometimes extraordinarily reveal His purpose therein to some of His selected servants; yet provided that the revelation be examined and allowed of the church. But as for such things as concern immediately the salvation of our souls, God's Spirit doth most comfortably reveal them to us, in our prayers, in His Word, and in His Sacraments; all of which it is most true that the secrets of God are amongst them that fear Him.

Uses:

The use of this doctrine is double: for instruction and for exhortation.

(1). For our instruction, here we learn how to answer the church of Rome. They ask us how do we know true religion from erroneous; or true Scripture or true Sacraments from forged? We answer, first, by itself, by sight and sense of the excellencies thereof; as we know gold from brass, or silver from lead. But what if the brass or tin be gilded over? I then answer secondly, we can know gold from brass, or silver from tin, by the sound and smell, and hardness to endure, and by the operation; so there is a spiritual sound of the Scriptures in the ears of a Christian, a spiritual comfort and taste in true religion, a spiritual operation (in holy mens' hearts) of the true Sacraments. But what if false prophets come in sheeps clothing, and by lying wonders seem to give the same sound, taste, smell, virtue, and operation unto their forgeries, or at least challenge it, and say that theirs is true? I answer lastly, true religion, true Scripture, true Sacraments, true prophets, true doctrines from false, are revealed by a holy and supernatural revelation from God's Spirit; which by evident and powerful demonstration, assureth us what is true and what is false for the substance of salvation. And this spirit is given to all that in true humility do seek it, in holy prayer and in a holy and frequent use of God's Word and sacraments; and to none else. And surely if the papists were as well acquainted with the Spirit of God as they are with their own forged revelations, they would never deny it. By force of this testimony a Christian man knoweth, as assuredly as that God is God, that the pope as now he is, and as he exerciseth his place and power, cannot be the true vicar of Christ; and that popery, as it is now established by the Council of Trent and taught by the most learned of their side, cannot be the true religion, nor the safest way to heaven. And when question is, what is the meaning of this place, There is one God, and one mediator betwixt God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5), if all the world should say the contrary, a Christian man will know and believe there are no more mediators to God but Christ; or of that place, that Christ was offered for our sins

once for all (Heb. 10:10); that there is no sacrifice can purchase us pardon but His; let papists colour the matter by unfound distinctions as much as they can; and the same might be shewed in divers other points and places. And if any ask how this can be; I answer, Noah was warned of God of things not seen; so God's children are warned and assured of God of such things as concern their salvation, though they be things beyond sense and reason; God's secrets do belong unto them.

(2). The use of exhortation is, that if God warn His children of His will, and reveal His secrets to them, this should move and excite us to become truly and indeed God's servants; for we serve not a Lord that is strange and austere unto us; that will not give us a good look, or a fair word; nay, He is so far from that, that He calls us to His holy counsel, and makes us know His secrets, and communicates His own self unto us by His blessed Spirit; and by that Spirit revealeth unto us many excellent mysteries of salvation, which the carnal and profane men of the world never dream of.

II. In the second place, let us observe that Noah, being thus warned of God in this particular matter (as he had been formerly warned and taught of salvation by a Messiah to come), believeth not only the general promise of salvation, but also this particular promise of his preservation and deliverance. Out of which his practice, we may learn two things:

(1). First, that faith is a supernatural work of God in those men's hearts that have it. That it is a work of God, it appeareth in that it always acknowledgeth and believeth God's Word; that it is supernatural, it appeareth in that it apprehendeth and believeth whatsoever God's Word delivereth, be it never so incredible to reason or sense. But how doth God work this faith? By His Word; for as God

is the author and worker of faith, so God hath appointed a means whereby He works it, and that is His Word; which Word of God is the only ordinary outward means to work faith. And that Word of God is two ways to be considered: either as revealed by God Himself (as to Noah here), or else being written by God, is either preached by His ministers, or read by a man's self in want of preaching; and these are all one, and are all means ordained of God to work faith; and that not only to begin it where it is wanting, but to augment it where it is begun.

Which being so, it must teach us all, not only with special care and reverence to hear the Word, by whomsoever it is preached; but also to hear it read; yea, to read it ourselves with all diligence. So doing, it will work out, and make perfect in us that holy faith, which will make us blessed in ourselves, and accepted of God, as it did Noah in this place.

(2). Secondly, here we learn what is the whole object of faith, or what is all that that faith believeth, namely, nothing but God's Word, and all and every Word of God. So that faith hath two objects, differing not in nature, but in degree: principal and inferior. The principal object of true faith is the promise of salvation by Christ. The inferior objects thereof are all other particular promises of safety, deliverance, providence, help, assistance, comfort, or what other benefit soever is made either to the whole church, and so inclusively to any particular man; or which are made personally unto him. For saving faith believeth not only the grand promise of salvation, but all other promises either of spiritual or corporal blessings, which are subordinate to the great promise, and do depend on it, and are therefore apprehended by the same faith. So Noah here had already apprehended the main promise of salvation by the Messiah, and had hid it in his heart; and afterward when this particular promise of his

deliverance was made, by the same faith he laid hold on it also. And it is good reason that faith should do so, for if it apprehended the greater promise, then no marvel though it take hold of all other inferior promises, which are but dependences upon the principal.

By this that hath been said, it appeareth that we are wrongfully charged by them who say, we teach that saving faith believeth only salvation by Christ, or apprehendeth only the promise of salvation by Christ; for we say and teach that it apprehendeth also other particular promises, and even the promises of outward and temporal blessings, as appeareth in this example of Noah.

III. Lastly, in that Noah a faithful man, is here warned of God of the dangers ensuing, that so he may avoid them; we may learn the loving care that God hath over them who have a care to fear and serve Him. Thus dealt He with His children in all ages, for their comfort and preservation, to encourage all men to serve God in truth and uprightness, as here Noah did; for so doing they may assure themselves of God's care and providence over them, even then, when His wrath smoked against the sinners of the world; and that furthermore in all exigents and extremities, He will teach them, either from His Word, or by the counsel of some others of His children, or else by His own secret inspiration, what they are to do, and what course to take, for their safety and deliverance.

How often shall a Christian man find in the course of his life that God put into his mind to answer thus and thus, or to foresee this or that; by which his so doing, he escaped some great danger; so that (though not in the same manner as Noah was) all faithful men do daily find that they are warned by God of such things as do concern them.

But what were those things whereof Noah was warned from God? The text saith, Of the things that were as yet not seen.

This hath not relation to the time, when the Holy Ghost wrote these words, but when God gave the warning to Noah; for then they were not seen, but were to come; for they were not performed for many years after, as shall appear in the particulars.

Particularly they were these three:

(1). First, the great and just wrath which God had conceived against the sinful world, for the universal corruption and general sinfulness thereof. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to that wicked age, as St. Peter saith (1 Pet. 3:11); the very Spirit of Christ preached in him; but they condemned both him, and the Spirit by which he spake, and made mock of him and all his holy admonitions, and solaced themselves in all their sinful pleasures, without fear or respect of God or man, pleasing themselves in their own defiled ways, and promising to themselves safety and security. But behold, this Noah, whom they esteemed a base and contemptible man, unworthy of their company; to him is revealed how short their time is, and that they must be cut off in the midst of their jollity. God's children, whom wicked men do think and speak of with great contempt, do know full well the miserable state of such men, and the fearful dangers hanging over them; when the wicked men themselves are far from thinking of any such matter.

(2). The second thing which God revealed to Noah, was that He would save him and his family from perishing by the waters which he would bring upon the world. His faith was not in vain; God rewarded it with a singular preservation. Thus dealt He always with His children, delivering Lot out of Sodom (Gen. 19); Rahab out of Jericho (Josh. 6:22); the Kenites from the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15); and here

Noah out of that general destruction. And this God beforehand reveals unto him, for his greater comfort and security; that when signs and strange tokens did foretell and shew that still the destruction was nearer and nearer; still Noah might comfort himself in the assurance of that merciful promise which God had made him of his deliverance, and of his family also for his sake.

(3). The third thing revealed to him, was the means whereby he should be saved from the universal flood; namely, by an ark, which for his more assurance he is bid to make himself; that so at every stroke he gave, he might remember this merciful promise of his God unto him. For as every stroke in the making of the ark was a loud sounding sermon to that sinful generation, to call them to repentance; so was it also an assurance unto Noah of his deliverance. Of which ark, and of Noah's obedience in making it, we shall hereafter speak at large. And thus much concerning the ground of Noah's faith, which was a warning, or revelation, from God.

B. Now followeth a second point, namely, the commendation of his faith, or a description of the excellence thereof by divers and singular effects.

I. Moved with reverence,

The first effect of his faith is, It moved in him a reverence, or a reverent fear, of that God that spake to him, and of His justice towards sin and sinners, and of His mercies towards him.

In this effect, we are to consider two points:

1. The ground of the reverence, and 2. The occasions or motives of it.

1. The ground whence this reverence sprang, was his true and saving faith; for the Holy Ghost first tells us of Noah's faith, and afterwards of this reverent fear he had of God and His great works.

Where we learn, that whosoever is endued with saving faith is also touched with fear and reverence at the consideration of God and His glorious works; whether they be works of (1) His power, (2) His wisdom, (3) His mercy, or (4) His justice, or of all together.

(1). For the first, David could not see the works of God's power in the creation, Psa. 8. But when he looked up and beheld the heavens, the works of God's hands, the moon and the stars which He had ordained; he forthwith fell into a reverence and admiration of God's mercy to man, for whom and whose use He made them all.

(2). For the second, the same David could not enter into consideration of God's wisdom in the admirable frame of man's body, Psa. 139. But he presently falls into a reverence and admiration thereof in most excellent and passionate words: Thou possessest my reins, thou coveredest me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My bones are not hid from thee, though I was made in a secret place, yet thy eyes did see my substance, when I was without form, and in thy book were all my members written, which in continuance were fashioned, though there were none of them before. How dear therefore are thy counsels to me, O God. Thus we see how this holy king cannot content himself with any terms to express his religious and reverent concept of God's majesty.

(3). For the third, God's merciful works to His church and children have always been considered of by good men with great reverence;

and, What shall I give unto the Lord, saith David, for all His benefits poured on me? (Psa. 116:12).

(4). But especially, the judgments of God have been always entertained of God's children with much reverence and admiration. Blessed David saith, My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments (Psa. 119:120). How would this noble king have trembled and been afraid if he had been a private man? And how glorious is God and His works of judgments, whereat even kings themselves do tremble? And the prophet Habakkuk saith, that when he but heard of God's judgments to come, his belly trembled, his lips shook, rottenness entered into his bones (Hab. 3:16). And thus Noah here, hearing of God's just wrath against the sinful world, and of His purpose to overthrow all living flesh by water, was moved with great fear and reverence at this mighty work of God; and from the view of this His great and just judgment, his faith made him arise to a more earnest consideration of the majesty of God. By all which it is more than apparent that true faith (wheresoever it is) worketh a holy fear and reverent estimation of God and of His works, and of God in and by His works; whereby on the contrary side, it followeth that therefore to think basely or ordinarily of God, to think scornfully of His works, or to deny His power and His hand in the great works either of mercy or judgment done in the world, is an argument of a profane heart, and wanting true faith.

Use:

The use of this doctrine discovers the profaneness and the great want of faith that ordinarily is in the world. And that appears by two evidences: the first, is to men's own consciences; the other is to the view and sight of all the world.

First, men may see in themselves a profane heart and void of faith, by this evidence. For, doth a man in his heart think basely of God, His power, His justice or His mercies? Doth he either doubt of them, or granting them, doth he think of them without fear and amazement? Then assuredly his heart is void of true faith, and far from the life and power of religion. For assuredly, where God is known and believed, there that man's heart (though he be a king) cannot once think of God without a reverence of His majesty and an admiration at His greatness, and his own baseness; therefore the want of this argueth a want of true religion and true faith in men's hearts.

Secondly, this profaneness discovers itself to the world by want of reverence to God's works. Let the Lord send unseasonable weather, or famines, or plagues, or any strange signs in heaven or in earth; forthwith they are but fools that cry out, Behold the finger of God, the hand of God. No, it is nature, and it is produced by natural causes. Ill weather comes from the stars; famines from ill weather and men's covetousness; Plagues from famines or from ill airs, or else by apparent infection from another place. But cannot nature and natural means have their place, unless they have God's place? God overthroweth not them, why should they overthrow God? Yet thus it is in the world, and thus God is robbed of His glory; and he is but a simple fellow which is moved with reverence at sight of such things, or begins to magnify God's power and justice in them. This is too apparent to be denied; for have we not now as great causes of fear as may be? Noah heard of water; and we hear that fire is to destroy the world, and yet where is he that is moved with reverence as Noah was; and yet Noah could say, The flood shall not be these 120 years; but who can say and prove that this world shall not be destroyed by fire within 120 years? And till the flood came, they had doubtless many other plagues, which were forerunners of the general destruction; all

which as they came, moved Noah unto reverence; and so we in this life do see the great works of God's judgments upon men, upon families, upon towns, upon countries, and whole kingdoms, and we feel His heavy hand in many sharp strokes; but who and where are they whose hearts fear God the more, and do tremble in the consideration of His judgments? Nay alas, amongst many it is but a matter of mockery so to do. This is not the fault of our religion, but the want of it; for if men truly knew and believed in God, they could not think nor speak of God, nor look at His works, but with fear and reverence. For as our fear of God is, so is our faith; little fear of God, little faith; and no fear at all, no faith at all. Let therefore all men shew their religion by their fear of God, and let every Christian acknowledge God in His works. England hath been faulty herein in one point specially. We have had great plagues, which have taken away many thousands in short time wherein God hath shewed Himself mighty against our sins; but God's hand would not be seen nor acknowledged, but only nature and natural causes. But let England take heed that God send not a plague so general and so grievous that even the most profane men (even the sorcerers of Egypt if they were here) do acknowledge that it is the finger of God; and so give God that due reverence which in His ordinary visitation He hath not. Thus we see the ground whence this reverence in Noah sprang, namely, his faith.

2. Now let us see the occasions or considerations in Noah's heart that made him fear. The ground whereupon he feared was true faith; for else he had not been capable of any fear or reverence of God; but the occasions which stirred up this fear in him were some things else.

Now if we look to human reasons, Noah had no cause at all to fear as he did. For first, the judgment was far off, 120 years after; and common reason saith, it is folly to fear anything so far off, but it is

time enough to fear when it is near at hand. Again, he was one single man, and the world was full of wise and mighty men; they all heard of it, yet none of them feared; therefore their example might prevail with him, to keep him from fear, and to make him secure and careless with the rest; for examples are strong, especially when they are so general. Thirdly, the strangeness of the judgment threatened, was such as might drive any man in reason from fearing at all. For first, who would ever believe that God would drown all the world with water? Such a thing never had been, and therefore how could it be? And again, if all should be drowned, who would think that Noah should escape, and none but he?

These three considerations, being weighed in the balance of man's reason, would have kept Noah from fearing, or believing this word of God. But behold the power of faith; it goeth beyond all human reach, fixeth itself fast on God's word; and therefore he not only believeth it, but hath furthermore his heart possessed with a great reverence of God's majesty upon this message. And there were three motives stirring him up unto this reverence:

(1). First, the consideration of God's strange judgment upon the sinful world; to see that His wrath was so provoked that He should bring so unwanted a plague; so strange both for the nature of it; a flood of water to drown men; whereas generally all men can avoid the violence of that element; and for the measure of it, so great as it should drown all the world, and destroy all men.

Now that which this judgment of God wrought in Noah, the same effect should God's judgments work in us; namely, they should move us with reverence. For as Christ saith, Our days are like Noah's: As it was in the days of Noah, so shall the days be before the coming of Christ (Matt. 24:37). These days are as wicked, men are as covetous,

as cruel, as malicious, as voluptuous, and yet as secure as they then were; as full of sin, and yet as dead in sin as they were then. Therefore Noah looked for a flood 120 years after; and who can tell whether our world shall last so long a time or no? At least we may safely say (whatsoever the world doth), there is no man liveth, but within far less time than 120 years is assured to be overthrown to hell by a flood of God's wrath at his death, unless in the meantime he repent; and yet alas, where is he that is moved with reverence at the consideration hereof? The wicked man may escape the water of a flood, but he cannot escape the fire of hell, he cannot escape death, he cannot escape the last judgment. These are to come, yet they are far. Why then do not men fear as Noah did? He feared 120 years before it came. We can indeed tremble a little at a present judgment; as when fire breaks out, when waters overflow, when the plague destroyeth, or when famine consumes; but to tremble at a judgment threatened, though it be afar off, this is the work of true faith. This was in Noah, and wrought in him a reverence; and so would in us, if it were in us. When men cry fire, fire, we stir, we run, we tremble; but God crieth in His Word, the fire of hell, the fire of His wrath; and we care not, we stir not, we leave not our sins, we are not moved with reverence, as Noah was; therefore it is more than manifest that holy faith is wanting in the world, which Noah had.

(2). The second motive, stirring up this reverence in him, was the consideration of God's wonderful mercy to him and his family, in saving them. This mercy seemed so wonderful to him, both for that he knew it was undeserved (knowing himself a sinful man, and therefore not able to merit God's favour and being privy to himself of his own manifold imperfections) and also unexpected, for he thought not to have been spared alone in an universal destruction; therefore he wondered with reverence at so great a mercy. Thus God's mercies do not only win a man's heart to love God, but even to fear Him with

much reverence. This David proveth (Psa. 130:4), There is mercy with thee O Lord, that thou mayest be feared; as though he had said, Thy great mercies to thy children, O Lord, do make them conceive a reverent estimation of thee. This made David cry out in a holy passion, How excellent are thy mercies, O Lord.

And as God's children wonder at the excellencies of God's mercies unto them, so also at their own baseness and unworthiness. Thus doth holy David (2 Sam. 7:18) (who as he was a man of much faith, so was he full of excellent meditations, and reverent speeches of God, which are the true effects of faith), when God had set him in his kingdom, he saith, Who am I, O Lord, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hither? And 1 Chr. 29:14, But who am I, saith he, and what is my people, that we should offer thus unto the Lord? And doubtless even so said Noah's blessed soul often unto the Lord, and to itself, Who am I, O Lord, and what is my family, that we should be chosen out of so many thousands, and be saved when all the world perisheth?

Let us apply this to our church and state. If any nation have cause to say thus, It is England; God hath delivered us out of the thralldom of spiritual Egypt, and led us out; not by a Moses, but first by a child, then by a woman, and given us His gospel, more fully, and freely, and quietly than any kingdoms so great in the world; and still delivereth us from the cursed plots of the pope, and tyrannous invasions of the Spaniard, who thought to have marked us in the foreheads with the brand of infamy, and to have done to us as they have done to other nations whom they have conquered; but God from heaven fought for us, and overthrew them in their own devices; yea, the Lord put His hook in his nostrils, His bridle in his lips, and carried him back again with shame and reproach (2 Kin. 19:28). We are unworthy of such a mercy, if our souls do not often say unto God, O Lord, what are we

and what is our people that thou shouldest be so wonderful in thy mercies unto us?

And particularly this must teach every Christian to be a careful observer of the favours and mercies that God vouchsafeth to his soul and body, to him or his; and the consideration of them must make him daily be moved with reverence, and reverent thoughts of God's majesty; and still as the Lord is more and more merciful unto him, to bear still the more fear and reverence unto him for the same.

(3). The last motive of this reverence in Noah, was the consideration of God's power and wisdom, both in the judgment upon the world, and in the mercy upon him; for (i) first, in the judgment, it was wonderful that God would choose so weak an element as water to destroy and vanquish the huge giants of those days; but therein appeared first God's power, that by so weak means can cast down His enemies; and again, His wisdom, that as an universal wickedness had polluted the whole world, so a flood of water should wash the whole world. Secondly, the mercy was also wonderful that God should choose to save Noah by so strange a means as an ark, which should swim on the waters. For Noah though, if the Lord will save me, he will either take me up into heaven (as He did Enoch a little before), or else make me build a house upon the top of the highest mountain. But the Lord will save him by no such means, but by an ark; wherein appeared first, God's power that would save him by so weak a means, as might seem rather to destroy him. For Noah must lie and swim in the midst of the waters, and yet be saved from the waters; and the ark must save him; which in all reason, if the tempests had cast it against the hard rocks and mountains, or upon the strong castles and houses of the mighty giants, would have been broken in pieces; and so it had, but that God Himself was the master and pilot in that voyage.

(ii) And secondly, God's wisdom shone clearly in this means; because God would have him saved not in such sort as the world might not see it (as it would have been if he had been taken up into heaven or into the air); but would have him saved in an ark; that so all the wicked men, as they were a-dying in the water, or expecting death upon the tops of the hills, might see him live and be saved, to their more torment, and to their greater shame, who would not believe God's Word, as he did. For as the wicked in hell are more tormented to see the godly in the joys of heaven; so doubtless were the wicked of that age, to see Noah saved before their eyes. The view of this power and wisdom of God herein, made Noah give great reverence to God's majesty.

And no less ought it to work in the hearts of all true hearted Englishmen, and faithful Christians. For did not the Lord restore and establish the gospel to our nation, by a child, and by a woman; and in her time when all other princes were against her (contrary to the rules of policy)? And did not God in our late deliverance, overthrow our enemies, not so much by the power of man, as by His own hand? Did not He fight from heaven? Did not the stars and the winds in their courses fight against that Sisera of Spain? Let us therefore with blessed Noah stand amazed to see God's mercies, and with reverence and fear magnify His great and glorious name.

And thus we have the three motives that moved in Noah this reverence of God: the consideration 1. Of His great judgment on the sinful world; 2. Of His great mercy in saving him; 3. Of His admirable power and wisdom, shewed both in the judgment, and in the mercy.

Hitherto of the first effect. It followeth:

II. Prepared the ark.

The second effect of Noah's faith, whereby it is commended, is, that he upon a commandment received from God (as we heard before) doth make and build an ark, wherein to save himself and his family. Concerning this ark, much might be spoken out of the book of Genesis, but it is not to our purpose; which is no more in this chapter, but to shew the obedience and practice of faith, and therein the excellency of it. Now the point here to be spoken of, is not the matter, nor the measure, nor the proportion, nor the fashion, nor the uses of the ark; all which in the 6th chapter of Genesis are fully described; but the action and obedience of Noah in preparing it, as God bad him; whereof the Holy Ghost (in Gen. 6:22) saith, Noah did according to all that God had commanded him, even so did he.

Now in this action of Noah's faith, divers points of great moment are to be considered:

1. First, why did God bid Noah make an ark 120 years before the flood, when he might have built it in three or four years?

The answer is, God did so for divers causes; some respecting the sinful world, as that they might have longer time and more warnings to repent; every stroke of the ark, during these 120 years, being a loud sermon of repentance unto them. Again, that they might be without excuse, if they amended not; and lastly, that their iniquities might be full, and their sins ripe for vengeance. But of all of these we will not speak, because they concern not Noah, of whose faith we are only to speak; let us therefore touch only those causes which concern Noah. And in regard of him, the Lord did thus, that He might try his faith and patience, and exercise other graces of holiness in him. Thus God dealeth with his servants always; He exerciseth them many and strange ways in this world. He led the Israelites in the deserts of Arabia forty years; whereas a man may travel from Rameses in Egypt

to any part of Canaan in forty days; and this God did to humble them, and try them, and to know what was in their heart (Deut. 8:2).

God promised Abraham a son, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 12:3), but he performed it not until 30 years after (Gen, 21:2); He gave David the kingdom of Israel, and anointed him by Samuel (1 Sam. 16:13), but he attained it not until many years after; and in the meantime was persecuted and hunted by Saul as a flea in a man's bosom; or as a partridge in the mountains (1 Sam. 24:15, 26:20). And thus God exercised him both in this and other His promises, as He saith in Psalm 40:1. In waiting, I waited on the Lord; and Psalm 119:82, Mine eyes fail for the waiting for thy promise. O, when wilt thou comfort me? Thus God dealt with them, and thus in some measure He deals with all His children, to humble and to try them, and to know what is in their hearts; for that, in these cases, men do always shew themselves, and their dispositions. When men enjoy all things at their will and wish, who cannot make a fair profession? But where men are long deferred, and kept from that that is promised, and that they expect, and are so long crossed in their expectations; then they appear in their own colours.

And as God dealt with them, so will He one way or other do with us; if we be His servants. He will at some time of our life or other, lay some such affliction upon us as may try us, and our faith, and our patience, and our humility. For if we be hypocrites, and have no true graces, but only a shew; this will discover it; and if we have true and sound faith, and patience; this will make them shine like orient pearls in their true and perfect beauty.

2. Secondly, as God bad Noah build an ark so long time before any need of it, so he did without denying or gainsaying. So saith the story (in Genesis), He did according to all that God commanded him. And

thus the Holy Ghost saith here, He being warned of God by faith prepared the ark. Where we learn that where true faith is, there followeth true obedience to every commandment of God; insomuch as godly believing man no sooner heareth any duty to be commanded of God, but he thinks his soul and conscience is tied to obedience; and this is the nature of true faith. And it is as impossible to be otherwise, as it is for fire having fuel not to burn. Acts 15:9, Faith purifieth the heart, namely, from careless disobedience to God's Word; for if from any corruption at all, then from it especially, because it is most contrary to the pureness of true faith.

This being so, sheweth us, not any fault in our religion (as the papists slander us), but the want of our religion, and the want of true faith in the world; for there is almost no obedience to God's commandment. For first, Turks and Jews acknowledge not the Scriptures; and the papists have set aside God's commandments to set up their own. And few Protestants have the feeling of the power of true religion, and nothing indeed but a bare profession; but it must be a feeling of the power of it which produceth true obedience. And alas, we see men obey not God's commandments. God saith, Swear not by my name vainly; Keep my Sabbath. Where is there a man of many that feareth to break these? Alas, there are more mockers of such as would keep them, than careful and conscionable keepers of them. How truly said Christ, When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8). It is likely therefore, these be the days wherein we may wait for the coming of Christ; for the general want of obedience sheweth the general want of faith.

3. But this obedience of Noah is better to be considered of; for it was very excellent and extraordinary; there being many hindrances that might have stopped him in the course of his obedience, and to have persuaded him never to have gone about the making of the ark.

(1). As first, the great quantity of the ark, amounting to many thousand cubits; a work of huge labour and great charge.

(2). Again, the length of his labour, to last 120 years. It is a tedious thing, and troublesome to man's nature, to be ever in doing, and never to have done.

(3). Thirdly, the building of it was a matter of much mockery to the world; for it signified, 1. The destroying of the whole world; 2. The saving of him and his. These things were taunted at by the worldly wise men of that sinful age, and he was loudly laughed at by many a man, to think all the world should perish, to imagine that he and his should be delivered.

(4). Lastly, the building of the ark was a harsh thing to nature, and natural reason, in many respects; for,

(i) First, that all the world should be destroyed seemed not possible to be, because it never had been.

(ii) Secondly, it seemed not likely that God's mercy should be so wholly swallowed up of His justice.

(iii) Thirdly, they must live in the ark, as in a close prison, without comfort of light or fresh air, and amongst beasts of all sorts, and that for a long time, he knew not how long. Now reason would tell him, he had better die with men than live with beast; and better die a freeman and at liberty than live a prisoner; and better die with company than live alone; and that if God had purposed to save him, he could have used other means, and more easy, more direct, and more safe than this; that therefore his deliverance was to be doubted of.

(iv) And lastly, reason would say, I make myself a gazing and mocking stock to the world for 120 years; and it may be that God's purpose will be altered, and no flood will come; or if it come, I go into the ark and it chance to break against the mountains, so that I perish with the rest, then I am worst of all, who perish notwithstanding all my labour; therefore I had better let it alone, and take my venture with the rest of the world.

These doubtless, and many such natural considerations came into his mind, and stood up as so many impediments of his faith. But behold the power of true faith in the heart of a holy man; it overcometh all doubts, it breaketh through all difficulties, to obey the will and Word of God. Yea, it gives a man wings, with which to fly over all carnal objections. Thus we see it here in Noah, and afterward shall as clearly see it in Abraham and other holy men.

The use of this doctrine discovereth the weakness of many men's faith; for if the doctrine of the gospel go current with our natural affections, or seem plausible to our natures, we do formerly obey it; but if it cross our affections, or go beyond our reason, or control our natural dispositions, then we spurn against it, we call it into question, we are offended at it, and dent our obedience. Here wants the faith of Noah, which carried him beyond the compass of nature and reach of reason, and made him believe and do that which neither nature could allow, nor reason like of, and which would be displeasing to his natural affections. Let us therefore learn to practice true faith, by believing forthwith what God shall say unto us, without asking advice, or hearing the objections of flesh and blood. God threatened in times past the overthrow of the great monarchies of the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Persians, Grecians, Romans; reason did make doubts how it could be, but faith believed it, and it is done. God in latter times threatened the fall of abbeys, and dispersing of monks

for their wickedness. It seemed impossible to reason, yet faith in some believed it, and it came to pass.

God now threateneth the ruin of Babylon, and the full revelation of Antichrist, and the overthroweth of the new found hierarchy of the Jesuits, which glitter so in worldly glory, and in outward strength; this seems hard to bring to pass, but let faith believe it, for it is God's word, and shall be fulfilled in His season. God hath said, that our bodies shall rise again, even these bodies which are burned to ashes, or eaten of beasts, or fishes, or turned to dust in the earth. This is a wonder to nature, an amazement to reason; but faith will believe it, and shall find it true, for God hath said it.

God saith, Christ is in the sacrament, truly and really present to the soul of a Christian. Carnal senses deny this, and natural reason knoweth not how; but ask with the Caperneans, How can He give us His flesh to eat? (John 6:52). But faith believeth it, and knoweth how; though to outward sense it cannot be expressed. And it was a holy and divine speech used by holy martyrs, who being asked how Christ could be eaten in the sacrament, and not with the teeth, answered, My soul knoweth how. God saith, Wicked men, though they flourish never so, are miserable; and good men are blessed above all other. Reason and worldly experience say this is false; but true faith believes it, and finds it true; for never did any child of God desire to change his estate with the mightiest or wealthiest wicked man in the world. God saith, He that will follow Christ, must deny himself, and his own desires, and follow Christ in bitterness and affliction. Nature saith, This is a hard lesson, who can bear it? But faith believes it, yields to it, and endeavours the practice of it, because God hath so commanded. Such is the power and excellency of true faith.

4. Fourthly, and lastly, out of this action and obedience of Noah, mark a special lesson. God had revealed to him that He would save him and his family, and assured him he should not perish. Yet for all this, he makes an ark; whereupon it followeth that Noah, though he knew God would save him, yet was persuaded that he must use the means, or else should not be saved. He might have said to himself, God hath said, and bound Himself by covenant, He will save me; now if I make not the ark, yet His Word is His Word, and He will stand to it. His will cannot be altered. Though I be false, He will be true; though I do not that I should do, yet He will do what belongs to Him; therefore I will spare my labour and cost of making the ark; especially seeing it is a matter of so much mockery, and so ridiculous to reason. But Noah is of another mind; he will not sever God's Word from His means. He dependeth on God's Word for his safety, but not on His bare words without the means.

Whence we learn that though a man be certain of his salvation, yet he is to use the means of salvation, and that not only, though he be certain in the certainty of faith, but though he could be assured from God Himself by immediate revelation. For if God should say to a man by his name, thou shalt be saved; it is no more than here was said to Noah for his deliverance. For to him said God, I will destroy all flesh, but with thee I will make my covenant, and thou shalt be delivered; yet for all that, Noah judgeth that if he use not the means, if he make not an ark, he is to look for no deliverance; this was Noah's divinity. Contrary both to the divinity and practice of some in this age, who say, If I shall be saved, I may live as I list; and though I live as I list, yet in the end I can say, Lord have mercy on me, I am safe enough. But Noah would not trust his body on such conditions, though they be so presumptuous as to trust their souls. Let such men be assured, God in His decree hath tied the ends and the means together. Let not therefore man separate what God hath joined together. He that doth,

let him look for no more salvation if he use not the means, than Noah would have done for safety if he had made no ark. And thus we see the second effect of his faith.

It followeth,

To the saving of his household.

Now, this second effect of preparing is further enlarged by a particular enumeration of the ends or purposes why the ark was made; namely, both of God's commandment, and his obedience in making it.

1. By it, he saved his household.

2. Hereby, he condemned the world.

1. The first end which both God had in commanding and Noah in making the ark, was the saving of his household; that is, himself and all that belonged to him, which were his wife, their three sons and their wives (Gen. 7:7).

But, first of all, it may seem wonderful how this ark should save him and his household in this general destruction. For it was a great and huge vessel resembling a ship; yet so far unlike as it is called an ark. It must float above the water, it must be laden with a heavy burden, and yet without anchor to stay her, without mast to poise her, without stern to guide and move her, without master to govern her. For Noah was partly an husbandman and partly a preacher; and though he had much learning, yet the use of sailing was not then found out; and therefore in all reason, this ark would be carried on hills and rocks by the violence of the tempests, and so slit in pieces. Yet, for all this, it saved him, even when heaven and earth seemed to

rain together (so vehement was the rain), even then it saved him and his. How came this to pass? Even because God's providence and His hand was with it. He was the Master, and the Steersman. For as God Himself shut the doors of the ark upon him, when he was in, and made it fast after him, that no water might enter (which was impossible for Noah himself to have done) (Gen. 7:16). So doubtless the same God that had vouchsafed to be his porter, was also his keeper and preserver, and the Master of the ark during that voyage. And from hence came it to pass that the ark saved him, which otherwise in reason it could never have done.

(1). Here we learn, first, the special and extraordinary presence and providence of God over His children in great distresses and extremities. His providence is over all His works, for He forgets nothing that he hath made; but the special eye of His providence watcheth over His children, as a master of a family hath an eye over his meanest servants, yea, over his very cattle; but his care night and day is over his children. And as God overlooketh all His children always, so principally His providence sheweth itself when they are in the deepest dangers, or in the greatest want of natural helps. When Daniel was cast into the lion's den, God was there with him and shut their mouths (Dan. 6:22). When the three children were cast into the fiery furnace, God was with them and took away the natural force from the fire (Dan 3:27). When the Israelites were to pass through the sea or else die (a hard shift), God was with them and made the sea give place to His children, and stand like two walls on either side of them (Exod. 14:22). When they were to wander through the wild wilderness, through so many dangers and discomforts as deserts do afford, Christ was with them, and waited upon them with His continual comfort and assistance (1 Cor. 10:4). And so when Noah was to go into the ark, and (being in) must have the door shut and closed upon him; his case was pitiful. For do it himself he could not;

it both being so big that elephants and camels must enter in at it; and though he could have pulled it to, yet being within, he could never have sufficiently have closed it from the water. Nor would any other of that wicked world do it for him; they did not owe him so much love or service, but rather mocked him and laughed at him; as, first, for making the ark; so now for entering in, when he knew not how to have it closed. How should he do? Himself could not, others would not; God Himself with His own hand shut it for him. And after, when he was in, and was in danger to be thrown upon the rocks, and to be split in pieces on the hills, and had no anchor, no stern, no pilot, no master; God Himself was with him, and was all in all unto him. The eye of His love, and the hand of His power was over him, and so the ark saved him and his household. Such is the providence of God over His, when they are in the deepest distresses, and most destitute of all worldly comforts.

The use of this doctrine ministereth comfort unto God's children, as they are sure of divers calamities to fall upon them; so are they sure also of a special care of God over them; even in their greatest extremities. And this may God's children (who serve Him in the true obedience of faith) ever assure themselves of, that the Lord doth never forget nor forsake them in any of their troubles; but will be ever ready with His merciful hand to defend them from dangers, to provide for them in necessities, and to comfort them in distresses, when they know not in the world how to do. Elisha (2 Kin. 6:15) had an army of men sent against him, to take him; How should one man escape from a whole army? His man cried, Alas, master, what shall we do? He answered his man, and bade him, Fear not, there were more for him than against him; that is, more angels (though they were unseen) for him, than there were men in the army against him. And so when no man would shut the door for Noah, there were angels enough ready sent from God to do it for him; and when all

wicked men wished he might perish with the ark he had made, and assured themselves he would perish; having no such helps as ships require; then the holy angels, or rather God Himself, supplied all such wants unto him; and so when themselves perished, they saw him and his household saved by that ark. And no less care hath God over His church and children to this day. And though He worketh not visible miracles for them, yet they feel and find that He is oftentimes mighty and wonderful in preserving them, in providing for them, in assisting them, and in comforting them, when else without that providence of His, they know they had miscarried.

Again, where God Himself vouchsafeth in Noah's danger to be the Master and Pilot of this ark, that so it may save him and his household; we learn the anciency and dignity of the trade of mariners, sailors and masters of ships. The anciency: For we see it is as old as Noah, as old as the second world, even 4,000 years old. The dignity is great; for God Himself was both the first author and the first practiser of it. The author and first deviser: For Noah made not this ark of his own head, but (as we heard before) he was warned of God to do it. And He was the first practiser; for God Himself performed all those services unto Noah in the ark; else it had never saved him.

This being so, it is the more grief to see that worthy calling so abused and debased as it is; the most of them that practise it being profane, ungodly and dissolute men. Such men should remember, God made the first ship, and God was the first Master, and the first Mariner, and the first Pilot, the first governor of a ship; and they should labour to be like Him. This is one of those few callings which may say, God was the first deviser and practiser of it. All callings cannot say so; why then should they so far forget whom they succeed? Indeed, upon the seas and in distresses, they will make some

profession of religion; but let them come ashore; what swearing, what whoring, what drunkenness amongst them. But let them be afraid to be so profane, which hold the place which once God Himself held; or else let them know they are unworthy of so good a calling.

And thus we see the reason and the means how the ark could save him and his household; namely, because God did govern it.

(2). In the next place, observe the end and use of the ark. It was to save this holy man and his household. Learn here that God's servants in common calamities have safety; for God Himself giveth them security, and provideth deliverance. Thus was it ever. When God proceedeth in judgment against Jerusalem, for the sins thereof; He marketh the godly in their foreheads; namely, such as mourn and cry for the abominations which are done against God (Ezek. 9:4).

When Sodom must be destroyed, righteous Lot and his family must be drawn out; nay, the angel can do nothing till he be safe (Gen. 19:16,22). When the destroying angel went over the land of Egypt, and destroyed the firstborn in every house of the Egyptians (the Israelites dwelling among them), He passed over all the Israelites, whose doors were sprinkled with the blood of the Paschal Lamb (Exod. 12:13). And even so he whose heart and soul is sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, no calamity can do him hurt; nay, when others are smitten he shall be delivered.

The use of this doctrine is to our church and state. We have by God's mercy long enjoyed peace and the gospel; and both under a gracious government; and with these, many other blessings. Yet speak truth, and the sins of our times call for a flood, as in Noah's time; and sure a flood of tribulation must come one way or other. For this was always the state of God's church; now peace, now persecution. Peace abused causeth trouble and calamities. Therefore as we have so long

had peace and ease, so assuredly look for a flood; what it will be or when, knoweth no man; only He who will send it, the righteous and almighty God. How then shall we do, when the flood of tribulation is upon us? There is no way but one. Believe in Christ Jesus; settle thy heart in true faith; repent of thy sins; get God's favour and forgiveness; and then when the flood comes, God's providence shall afford thee (one way or other) an ark of safety and deliverance. Sprinkle thy soul now with Christ's blood by faith and true repentance; and the destroying angel of God's wrath shall pass over thee and thy household.

(3). Thirdly, observe the largeness of God's bounty. Not only Noah shall be saved, but with him his household also. Why the Lord did so, there be divers reasons:

(i) First, for the propagation and multiplication of the world after the flood. If any object Noah and his wife might have served for that end; I answer, they were old; for he was 600 years old when the flood came; and though he lived 300 years after the flood (Gen, 9:28), yet read we not of any children that he had. If any further object, The first world was begun and multiplied by two alone, Adam and Eve and no more; why then should there be so many for the beginning of the second world? I answer, God did so in the beginning, to shew that all mankind come of one blood (Acts 17:26), and that in regard of body or birth, there is no difference originally betwixt man and man, which also was observed even in the second beginning. For though the world was multiplied by three brethren, Shem, Ham and Japheth, yet those three were not strangers, but all sons of one man, Noah; so that as at first by Adam and Eve, so after from Noah and his wife came all men in the world. But in the beginning of the second world, there must needs be more lines than one; because now the blessed seed was promised, whose line and kindred must needs be

kept from all other until His incarnation. Again, there was more cause now why the world should be speedily replenished than at the beginning. For first, the earth had some glory and beauty left it after the first curse; so that it was still a most pleasant and delightful habitation to Adam and Eve. But now by the second curse in the flood, all her beauty was gone, she and all her glory was overrun, spoiled and defaced; so that it had been a miserable habitation for Noah and his wife, if they had been without company. Secondly, the earth being much defaced, and the virtue of it almost quite perished by the flood, had now more need to be recovered by the hands and helps of many men's labours. And to this purpose the Scripture saith (Gen, 9:19 10:32), that the earth was divided amongst the three sons of Noah. And they lived not all together, but overspread the earth. And lest the beasts, which then were many, should overgrow the world, therefore God would have the world speedily replenished; and to that end, Noah and his wife had never a servant in the ark, but only such as should have children; their three sons and their wives. And thus the multiplication of mankind is the first cause why God saved Noah's children.

(ii) The second cause: it is likely that as himself was a righteous man, so they of his family were more orderly and religious than others of that wicked age; for good men make conscience of teaching their families; as Abraham (Gen. 18:18). And seeing Noah is commended for a just and good man, doubtless he did carefully instruct his household; and therefore it is to be supposed that all, or most of them, were holy and righteous persons fearing God.

(iii) Thirdly, though all of them were not righteous, yet they were all of the family of righteous Noah, and therefore for his sake they were saved; all being his children or his children's wives. For the righteous man procureth blessings not on himself alone, but on all that belong

unto him, dwell with him or are in his company. At Abraham's request, had there been but ten righteous men in Sodom, all had been spared for their sakes (Gen. 18:32). When Lot was delivered out of Sodom's destruction, the angels asked him, Hast thou any sons in law that they might have been saved for his sake? (Gen. 19:12). When Paul and 276 souls with him suffered shipwreck, and were all in present danger of drowning, God saved Paul, and for his sake all the rest; God gave him the lives of all that were with him in the ship (Acts 27:24). And so here Noah's children, and their wives, are spared for Noah's sake.

Let this encourage all men to serve God in truth and uprightness; seeing thereby they shall not make themselves alone blessed, but bring down God's blessing even on their houses, children and posterities; yea, the very places where, and the people with whom they dwell, shall fare the better for them. And thus we see the causes and reasons why not Noah alone, but even his household were also saved.

(4). In the fourth place, let us observe how the Holy Ghost saith that Noah built the ark; not for the saving of himself, but of his household; and it is so said for two causes:

(i) First, to shew that Noah, though he were the head and governor, yet was one of the household; for in the word household, himself is comprehended. Masters and fathers, though they be governors, yet must think themselves members of the household; so will they have more care thereof, when they esteem themselves members of the body, and parts of the whole.

(ii) Secondly, to teach us what care Noah had for his family; even so great that he prepared an ark for them all. Here is an example of a worthy master of a household; and yet all this was but for a temporal

deliverance. Now if he was so careful for his bodily safety, how much more was he to save them from hell and damnation, which he knew to be an eternal destruction of both soul and body. Therefore, doubtless, as he was a diligent preacher of righteousness to that sinful world; so principally a diligent preacher, and prayer, and catechiser of his own family; that so he might make them God's servants, and deliver them from the eternal fire of hell.

Noah's example is to be a pattern to all parents and fathers of families, to teach them care not only for the bodies and bodily welfare of their families, but especially for their souls and spiritual welfare. And if they be bound by all bonds of nature and religion to provide for the bodies of their children, let reason judge how much more straitly they are tied to look to their souls. But St. Paul saith, He that provideth not temporal things necessary for his family, is worse than an infidel (1 Tim. 5:8). Then what is he who provideth nothing for their souls? Surely his case is extremely fearful. Therefore, when thou hast provided meat, apparel, a calling, and marriage, house and livings for thy child; think not thou hast done, and so mayest turn them off. The world may take them thus; but God will not take them so at thy hands. No, the greater duty remains behind; thou must provide for their souls, that they may know God and fear His name. Thou must, with Abraham (Gen. 18:19) teach thy family, that they may walk in the ways of God; I know Abraham, saith God, that he will do it. And surely God will know all such as do so. By doing thus, men shall make their houses churches of God, as here Noah was; and it would be far better with our church and state if men did so; ministers in the church, and justices in the country should have much less to do, if masters of families would do their duties.

But to go further, let us see more particularly what this household was, that was thus saved by the ark.

(1). First, it was a family of four men and four women. Not men or women alone, but both, and consisting of as many women as men. Thus God would have one sex to love another, and one to think themselves beholden to the other; the beginning of the first world was by one man and one woman; of the second, by four men and four women; but always equal. And here also God would teach men not to condemn the other, though the weaker, sex; for God saved as many of them from the universal flood as he did men.

(2). Secondly, how many were they in all: but eight persons. Of the whole world no more were saved. A miserable spectacle. See what sin can do. It can bring many millions to eight persons in a short time. See what it is to offend God. Let us not then glory in our multitudes, but glory in this, that we know and serve God; for otherwise, if our sins cry out to Him against us, He can easily make us few enough.

(3). Thirdly, what were these eight persons? Not one servant amongst them all; there were none but Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives. It is marvellous that here were none of Noah's servants. Some think he had none, and that the simplicity of those days required no attendance, but that each one was servant to himself. And they seem to gather it out of Gen. 7:1 where God biddeth Noah, Enter thou, and all thine house into the ark; and when they entered, they are recounted in the seventh verse to be none but himself, his wife and his children; therefore, they say, in Noah's house there were no servants. But why might not Noah have servants, as well as Abraham and Lot had? Doubtless he had. But behold a wonderful matter; Noah's own servants would not believe his preaching, but chose rather to live loosely with the world, and

perish with it, than to live godly with their master, and be saved with him. This was and will be true in all ages, that in a wicked age, or in a wicked town, a master shall not be able to govern his own servants; but the stream of common wickedness, and ill examples of other men, doth draw them from the obedience of their masters. They can readily allege for themselves, We will not be used more hardly than other men are; We will not be tied to our hours, and bound to so many exercises, we will do as others do. Thus would Noah's servants do, and perished with the world. So hard a thing is it for a good man to have good servants in such times or places where wickedness reigneth.

And thus we have seen in some sort, how the ark saved Noah and his household, and what this household of his was.

Now besides this end and use of the ark, we are further to know that whereas this saving of them was but a corporal deliverance from a temporal death, this ark hath also a spiritual use, which we may not omit; for as many of Noah's family as were true believers, it was a means to save them another way, even to save their souls; for it taught them many things:

(1). First, it was an assurance of God's love unto their souls; for if He were so careful to save their bodies from the flood, they thereby assured themselves that he would be as good unto their souls, which they knew to be far more precious and excellent.

(2). Secondly, it shewed them how to be saved. For as they saw no safety, nothing but present death, out of the ark; so it taught them that out of God's church, and out of God's favour, no salvation could be expected; and so it taught them to labour to be in God's favour, and members of His true church.

(3). Thirdly, they saw they were saved from the flood by faith and obedience. For first, Noah believed God's word, that the flood should come; then he obeyed God's commandment, and made the ark as he was commanded. And thus he and his, by believing and obeying, were saved through the ark; and without these, the ark could not have saved them. This taught them more particularly how to be saved; namely, by believing God and obeying God, or else no salvation. For when they saw their bodies could not be saved without them, it assured them much less their souls could be saved without faith and obedience.

(4). Lastly, this deliverance by the ark was a pawn unto them from God, assuring them of salvation if they believed in the Messiah. For, seeing God so fully performed His promise unto them for their bodily deliverance upon their believing; they thereby might assure themselves that He would perform His promise of salvation unto them upon their faith and true obedience. Moreover, it strengthened their faith. For, whenever after any promise of God was made unto them, or any word of God came unto them, then they remembered God's mercy and faithfulness unto them in their deliverance by the ark; and therefore believed.

Unto these and many other spiritual uses did the ark serve unto Noah, and to his household, as many of them as were believers.

But what is this to us? Indeed, the ark served them for a temporal deliverance, it saved their lives; therefore they also had reason to make spiritual use of it. But it saved not us, it served us to no corporal use; therefore how can we make any spiritual use of it?

I answer, Though we had no corporal use of the ark, yet there arises an excellent spiritual use out of the consideration of it.

The ark of Noah and our baptism are figures correspondent one to the other; that, as Noah's ark was to them, baptism is to us. Thus teacheth St. Peter (1 Pet. 3:20,21), To the ark of Noah, the figure which now saveth us, even baptism, agreeth. The same that St Paul here ascribes to the ark, St. Peter ascribeth to baptism. The ark saved them, baptism saveth us. Now the resemblance between these two figures hath two branches:

(1). First, as it was necessary for them that should be saved in the flood, to be in the ark; and out of the ark no possibility to escape; so it is for them that will have their souls saved, to be in Christ, and of His church; they must be mystical members of Christ and visible members of His church; and out of Christ and His church, no possibility of salvation. That this is true (for Christ), St. Peter proveth apparently (Acts 4:12), Among men there is no name given under heaven, whereby to be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ; neither is there salvation in any other.

And that this is true for the church he also proveth ((Acts 2:47), The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. See how such as are to be saved must join themselves to the church, when they see where it is; and all this is signified and taught in baptism. For the outward use of baptism makes us members of the visible church, and the inward and powerful use of baptism makes us members of Christ Himself.

The use and consideration hereof, should make us all more careful to be true members of Christ and of His church, by making not only a bare profession of religion, but by seeking to be incorporated into Christ by faith and true repentance; for this must save us when nothing can. As they that were out of the ark, no gold nor silver could buy out their safety, no lands nor living, no houses nor buildings, no

hills nor mountains, nothing in the world, nor the whole world itself, could save them; but being out of the ark, they all perished. So if a man be out of Christ, and out of His church, no gold nor silver, no honour nor glory, no wit nor policy, no estimation nor authority, no friends nor favour, no wisdom nor learning, no hills of happiness nor mountains of gold, can save his soul; but he must perish in the flood of God's eternal wrath. For as it proved folly to them that trusted to their high houses or catchhold on the hills, if they were out of the ark; so will it prove much greater folly to them that shall trust to any means of salvation, if they be out of Christ. And, contrariwise, as they that were in the ark were sure to be saved, do the waters, winds and weathers, storms and tempests all they could; and so that still, the more the waters rose, the ark rose also, and was ever higher than they; and the higher it was carried by the violence of the waters, the safer it was from the danger of hills and rocks; and so in the midst of danger they were out of danger; and were saved in the midst of the water; so he that is once truly in Christ, is sure of salvation, nothing can hinder it; floods of calamities may assault him and humble him, but they hurt not his salvation; he is in the ark, he is in Christ; nay, the gates of hell shall not overthrow him; but through all the ways of the devil's malice, and through all tempests of temptations, the blessed ark of Christ's love and merits shall carry him up, and at last shall convey him to salvation; this is the blessed assurance of all them that are truly baptised into Christ. But as for such as out of their profaneness, either care not to be in Christ, or contemn baptism; let them assure themselves, they be out of the ark, and they perish certainly. This is the first part of the resemblance.

(2). The second is this: Noah's body going into the ark, he seemed therein a dead man, going into a grave or tomb to be buried; for he was buried in the ark, and the ark in the waters, and he deprived of the fresh air and gladsome light; yet by God's appointment, it was the

means to save Noah, which in all reason, seemed to be his grave; and if Noah will be saved, he must go into this grave. So they that will escape hell and damnation by Christ, the true ark of holiness, must be buried and mortified in their flesh and fleshly lusts; and there is no way to come to life everlasting but this. For thy soul cannot live whilst thy sins, the old man, that is, thy corruptions, do live; but they must die and be buried, and then thy soul liveth; and whilst they live, thy soul is dead, and far from the life of grace, which is in Christ Jesus. All this is affirmed at large in Rom 6:3,4, where we may see apparently that we must by baptism die with Christ, and be buried with Him, else we cannot be saved by Him; our corruptions, our sins, which are the old man, must die and be buried; that the new man, that is, the grace and holiness of Christ, may live in us, and our souls by it; and he that thus dieth not, never lives; and he that thus is not buried, never riseth to true life. Thus mortification of sin is the way to heaven, and death the way to life eternal; and he that is not thus mortified in his corruption, let him never look to be quickened to grace or glory.

If this be so, we may then see what a miserable world we now live in, wherein mortification of sin is a thing unknown; not a man of many that can tell what it is; nay, grace is dead and holiness is mortified, and I fear buried also; but the old man reigns, corruption lives, and sin flourisheth. Mortifying of Christ by our sins is common; but mortifying of sin is seldom seen. For Christ is betrayed, crucified, and killed in a sort by the sins of men. What a fearful change is this? Christ should live in us, and we endeavour to crucify Him again; sin should be crucified, but it liveth in us. But if we will have Christ to save us, then must we mortify the body of our sin; for he that will live when he is dead, must die while he is alive. And he that will be saved by his baptism, must look that baptism work this effect in him, to make him die, and be buried with Christ, that afterwards he may rise

and reign with Christ. And then shall baptism save us, as the ark saved faithful Noah and his household.

And thus much for the first end and use of the ark; the second followeth.

2. By the which he condemned the world.

Here is the second end why Noah prepared the ark; to the condemnation of the world that then was. For by it (not by his faith, as some would read it), he condemned that wicked generation, both to a temporal destruction of their bodies, and to an eternal judgment in hell.

In the words, there are two points to be considered: (1). Who are condemned? The world. (2). Whereby? By Noah's ark.

(1). For the first, it may be asked, What is meant by the world? St. Peter answereth (2 Pet. 2:5), The world of the ungodly; that is, that generation of sinful men, who lived in the days of Noah, whom also (1 Pet. 3:20) he called disobedient; and their more particular sins are disclosed and recorded by Moses (Gen. 6:45) to be monstrous abuse of holy marriage, unnatural lusts, cruelties and oppressions; an utter neglect of God's service and Sabbath; and an extreme profaneness and dissoluteness in every kind. And this corruption was not private or personal, but universal, through all estates, sexes and ages. This world of the ungodly, this whole race of wicked and disobedient men were condemned; but how was that world condemned by Noah? Thus: God vouchsafed them 120 years to repent in, and appointed Noah to preach unto them during that time, to call them to repentance. But they believed not God, nor Noah, but continued in their disobedience, and grew in their ungodliness; therefore when that time was expired, God performed His word spoken by Noah,

brought the flood upon them, destroyed them all, and condemned in hell as many of them as died in impenitence and unbelief. And thus that wicked world was condemned, according as Noah in his ministry had foretold them.

Here we may learn:

(i) First, what the world of this age is to look for, unless there be repentance. For, to speak but of ourselves in this nation, Have not we had the gospel thirty years and more? And with peace, and much prosperity? Have not we had a goodly time given us to repent? What is our duty, but with reverence to see and acknowledge this goodness of God, to take hold of this merciful opportunity, this time of grace, and this day of salvation? If we do not, and make no account of the gospel, what can we look for, but to be condemned, as that world was? Look at the means and opportunities which these days afford; and they be as golden days, as ever were since Christ, or as ever can be expected till His coming again. But look at the profaneness and carnality and security of this age (even over all Christendom) and this is the iron age, these be the evil days; and so evil that nothing can be expected but a river of brimstone, and a flood of fire to purge it.

The days of the coming of the Son of man (which I take to be these days) shall be like (saith Christ, Matt. 24:37) unto the days of Noah. And, surely, in security and profaneness, they are like; and therefore in all reason they must be like in punishment. We must therefore take warning by them, and shake off this security which possesseth all men's hearts, and wait for the Lord in watching and prayer, and think every day may be the last day of this world; at least the last day of our lives; and let us prepare for it, and live in the expectation of it. Otherwise, if our sinfulness grow on a little further; nothing can we

look for but to be condemned in an universal judgment, as that world was. Let us therefore betake ourselves to a more serious serving of God; that the Lord when He cometh, may find us so doing.

(ii) Secondly, in that the whole world that then was, was thus destroyed and condemned, and (as we heard afore) only Noah and his household saved; we learn, that it is not good, nor safe, to follow the multitude. Noah was here a man alone, he held and believed against all the world, and yet his judgment and his belief was true, and all the world's false; and (accordingly) he saved, when they were all condemned.

It is marvel therefore that the church of Rome should so much stand upon numbers and multitudes for the gracing of their religion; for it ever was, and ever will be a weak argument. If multitudes might ever have been alleged; then unto Noah especially, to whom it might have been said, Who art thou that pretendest to be wiser than all men? And to know more than all the world? Thou that hast a faith by thyself, and hast no man to bear thee company; think not that all Adam's posterity, all the children of holy Enoch and Methuselah are all deceived, but thyself alone? Would not these and such like objections have discouraged any man? Yet behold the force of faith, Noah had God's Word for it, and therefore believed against all the world, and is commended to all ages for this faith. It is therefore but a vain flourish of the papists to press us to much with their multitudes, and universality, and consent, and unity, and succession, and continuance. For all this is worth nothing, as long as they first prove not that the doctrine or opinion which these multitudes hold, hath his ground from God's Word; till then, all the other is vanity. For it is better with Noah to have God's plain Word on his side, than to believe otherwise with all the world; which was here deceived and condemned, when Noah alone believed God's Word, and was saved.

And thus we see who were condemned: The world. To end this point, one question may not unprofitably be here moved:

Whether was all the world, that is all the men in that world, condemned or no? The words seem to imply that all but Noah were; and yet it may seem strange that of so many millions none should repent but he; if they repented, why were they not saved? I answer, The world of that wicked age was condemned two ways:

(i) First, with a corporal destruction, and so they were all condemned without exception. No high houses, no hills, no devices of man could save them. For the waters rose fifteen cubits above the tops of the highest mountains under heaven (Gen. 7:21,22). And it is but vain to imagine that any of them could be saved upon that ark; for first, it was so made with a ridge in the top (as is most probably thought) that no man could stand upon it, much less make any stay in that violent tossing by tempests. Again, if they could, yet could they not have lived so long for want of food; the waters being (almost) a year upon the earth. And thus it is most certain that all without exception were destroyed with bodily destruction.

(ii) But secondly, they were condemned to an eternal destruction in hell; and therefore St. Peter saith (1 Pet. 3:18), Their spirits are now in prison, who were disobedient in the days of Noah. Now all the question is, whether they were all condemned or no? I answer, For ought that we certainly know out of the Scripture, they were all condemned. Yet in the judgment of charity, we are not so to think; and the rather because there are many probable conjectures that some of them repented. For howsoever many of them believed not Noah, judging that he spake of his own head; yet it is more than likely that they saw it begin to rain extraordinarily; at least, when they saw themselves driven to the tops of the hills, and there looked

hourly for death; that then divers of the posterity of Enoch and Methuselah, and Lamech, were ashamed of their former unbelief, and then turned to God in faith and repentance. And doubtless this is the only or the principal cause why God brought the flood in forty days, which he could have done in four hours; that so men might have time to repent (Gen. 7).

But it will be said, if any repented, why then were they not saved? I answer, Because they repented not in time, when they were called by Noah's preaching. Repentance is never too late, to save the soul from hell; but it may be too late to save the body from a temporal judgment. And this, I take it, is that that we may safely hold; for it seems too hard to condemn all the posterity of Methuselah, Enoch. Lamech, and other holy patriarchs (who as the text saith, begat sons and daughters) and to think that none of them repented when they saw the flood come indeed, as Noah had said. It cannot be but they heard their fathers preach; and why might not that preaching work upon their hearts, when the judgment came, though before it did not? But why then did not God record in Scripture, neither their repentance, nor their salvation, but hath left it so doubtful?

I answer, for the very same reason for which He would not record Adam's nor Solomon's; all for this cause, that He might teach all men to the world's end what a fearful thing it is to disobey His commandments, as Adam did; or to defer repentance when they are called by God's Word, as these men did. Therefore to fear us from the like, though afterwards they repented; it pleased God not to record it, but to leave it doubtful.

This question being thus discussed, yields us two strong motives to repentance:

(a) First, for if we repent not betimes, our state then is fearful and doubtful, though not desperate; as we see here the salvation of Methuselah's children is doubtful; for they repented not when they were called, but deferred it, till the judgment came. So if we defer our repentance till our deaths, there is great question of our salvation; but let us repent, when we are called by God's Word, and then it is out of question, then there is no doubt of our salvation.

(b) Secondly, if we repent betimes, we shall escape the temporal judgment which God sends upon the world for sin. If not, but defer repentance till the judgment come, we may then by it save our souls, but our bodies shall perish in the universal judgment. If the children of Enoch and Methuselah, which were near akin unto Noah, had repented at Noah's preaching, they would have been saved with Noah; they did not. But when the flood came indeed, then doubtless they believed with Noah, and wished themselves in the ark with him; but it was too late, they saved their souls, but were drowned with the rest. So assuredly, when God threateneth any judgment on our church or nation, they that believe and repent in time shall escape it. But they that will live in wantonness with the world, and not repent till God begin to strike; if then they do when the flood is come (though salvation cannot be denied to repentance whensoever) yet let them assure themselves, they shall bear their part with the world in the punishment, as they did partake with them in their sins. Let then these two considerations move us all to turn to God by timely repentance; then shall we be sure to escape both the eternal and temporal judgment, and not be condemned, as here this world of the ungodly was. And thus we see who were condemned:

(2). The world.

The second point is, whereby were they condemned? The text saith only, by which He condemned c. Whereupon some would understand faith, and read it thus: by which faith he condemned the world. Which, though it be true (for the faith of holy men condemns the unbelieving and misbelieving world), yet is it not proper in this place where the ark is described by the uses of it; which are two, whereof this is one. And (besides the Greek construction doth well bear it) the judgment of almost all interpreters refers it to the ark. And further in all reason; that that saved him and his household, condemned the world also; but the ark is said to have saved them, therefore by it he condemned the world. Neither is this any derogation, but a commendation of faith; for by faith he made the ark, which ark condemned the world. Now by the ark, Noah condemned the world two ways:

(i). By his obedience in building it.

(ii). By his preaching in building it.

(i) For the first, God bad Noah build an ark, so great, and to such an use, as in all reason no man would have done it. Yet Noah by the power of his faith believed God's Word, and obeyed, and therefore built the ark. This faith and obedience of Noah to this commandment of God condemned the unbelieving and disobedient world, and made them without excuse. So saith Christ; The Ninevites, who believed at the preaching of Jonah, shall rise in judgment against the Jews and condemn them, because they repented not at Christ's preaching. And the Queen of Sheba, who came so far to hear Solomon, shall condemn them, who then would not hear Christ (Matt. 12:42,43).

Even so, Noah's obedience shall condemn them. For Noah, being told of a miraculous thing, and believing it, and being commanded so unreasonable a thing as the making of the ark, and obeying, did

condemn that wicked world, who would not believe God's ordinary promises, nor obey His ordinary and most holy commandments. And as the saints are said to condemn the world (1 Cor. 6:2) by being witnesses against them, and approvers of God's just sentence; so Noah's act and faith condemned that world. And thus we see it is apparent that the obedience and godly examples of good men do condemn the world.

The use whereof is to encourage us all to embrace Christian religion, and not be daunted by the scorns or other evil behaviours of profane men which cannot abide the gospel. For he that walketh in the way of holiness, and keepeth good conscience in the midst of a wicked generation; if his godliness do not overcome their evil, and convert them, it shall more demonstrate their wickedness, and condemn them. Our church is full of mockers, and they discourage many from Christ and religion; but let them know that this will be the end of it, their obedience whom they contemn and laugh at, will be their condemnation. And thus Noah, by his obedience in building the ark, condemned the world.

(ii) Secondly, so did he also by his preaching, as he built it. For the building of the ark was a part of his prophetic ministry.

The prophets preached two ways: in word and in action. For besides their verbal preaching and delivering of God's word, they preached in their lives and actions; especially in such actions as were extraordinary. And such was Noah's building of the ark; it was an actual preaching; yea, every stroke upon the ark was a loud sermon to the eyes and ears of that wicked world. For by making it, he signified some should be saved, and the rest drowned; namely, all that would believe and repent should be saved in it, and all that would not, should (out of it) be drowned; and because they believed

not this, therefore by it he condemned them. From this ground we may learn:

(a) First, that a man may be a true and sincere minister, lawfully called by God and His church, and yet not turn many unto God, nor by his ministry bring many to repentance. For here Noah, a prophet called immediately, yet in 120 years preaching both in word and action, he cannot turn one to faith and repentance. A most fearful thing, if we well consider it, that both by preaching and making the ark, he should not turn one of the sons of Lamech, Methuselah or Enoch to believe him; but that they should all rather choose to be misled in the general vanity of that wicked world, than to serve God with Noah. This was a most uncomfortable thing unto him as could be, yet this hath been the case and lot of many holy prophets. Isaiah must go and preach unto them, and yet his doctrine must burden their hearts that they would not be saved (Isa. 6:10). And Ezekiel must go and speak, and yet told beforehand, they will not hear him nor repent (Ezek. 3:4,7). And when St Paul himself preached unto the Jews at Rome, some believed not (Acts 28:24). There is nothing that will more discourage a man, and cast down his heart, than to see that his labours are not only in vain, but do take a contrary effect; that whereas they were bestowed to have saved them, they are means of their deeper condemnation. Therefore as when their labours bring men to God, they may greatly rejoice, and account those people as St Paul did the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:19), his crown, his joy, his glory; so when they do no good (as Noah here), but that men are worse and worse; this must humble and abase them in themselves, and let them know that power and virtue is not in them, but in God. So saith St Paul to the ungodly and impenitent amongst the Corinthians, I fear, saith he, when I come, my God will abase me amongst you, and I shall bewail many of them which have sinned and not repented (2 Cor. 12:21). And surely, this or nothing will

abase a minister, and minister matter of great bewailing; yet not so, but as still there is matter of true comfort and contentment unto all godly and faithful teachers. For whether thy labour be the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, unto thy hearers; it is to God a sweet savour of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15,16).

(b) Again, we may here learn that those who are condemned before God, have their condemnation by the preaching of the word; The secrets of all the world, saith the apostle, shall be judged by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel (Rom. 2:16); and here the preaching of Noah, and his actual preaching by preparing the ark, condemns the world. Such is the power and might of the ministry of God's word upon all that resist it.

Which being so, should teach all men when they come to hear God's word, to submit themselves to the power of it, to obey it, and become penitent; for otherwise, so many sermons as a man heareth, so many indictments are presented to God against him. And if at the last day there were no devils to accuse, these bills of indictments would both accuse and condemn him. And this judgment is begun in this life, as their consciences do often tell them, and is accomplished at the last day; for there is no dallying with God's word; if it cannot save, it kills. It is the fire, which if it cannot soften, it hardens. Let then all impenitent men make conscience to obey God's word, for if now they abuse it, it will be even with them, both here and in another world. For as the very same ark, which saved Noah and his household, condemned the world; so the same word of God, which believed and obeyed by godly men is their salvation; disobeyed and refused by ungodly men shall be their condemnation.

And thus much for the two ends, why Noah prepared the ark; and consequently, of the second effect of Noah's faith. It followeth:

III. And was made heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

Here is the third and last effect whereby the excellency of Noah's faith is commended. It made him an heir, and that not of the world (for so he was besides); but of that that the world could not yield, of righteousness; and that of the best of all, even of that righteousness which is by faith. These words have relation to that testimony which God gave of Noah in Gen. 6:9, Noah was a just and upright man, and walked with God. Now that which is spoken there more generally, is here particularly opened and unfolded; he was just or righteous, How? He was righteous by the righteousness of faith; so that these words are a commentary unto the other.

But because what is here affirmed of Noah is a most glorious thing; his faith made him an heir (that is, made him that was heir of all the earth, a better heir) therefore these words are to be well weighed. For their full opening, three points are to be considered:

1. What is the righteousness here spoken of.
2. Why it is called the righteousness of faith, or by faith.
3. How Noah was made heir of it by his faith.

1. For the first: That righteousness by which Noah and all holy men are to stand righteous before God, is not a righteousness of any nature, but such a one as is appointed of God for that purpose. That we may know it the more distinctly, we must examine the several kinds thereof.

Righteousness is of two sorts: Created and uncreated.

(1). Uncreated is that which is in God, and hath no beginning nor ending; no means, no measure. Of this speaketh the prophet (Psa.

119:137), Righteous art thou, O Lord. This cannot make any man righteous for two reasons:

(i) First, for the Godhead and it are all one; it is in God essentially. A man is one thing, and his righteousness is another; but God and His righteousness are all one; and therefore it is as impossible for any man to have this righteousness, as it is to be God.

(ii) Secondly, it is infinite, and man's soul is a finite creature, and therefore not capable of anything that is infinite; and consequently not of the unmeasurable righteousness which is in the Godhead. Therefore this we must leave to God, as proper to the Deity.

(2). Created righteousness is that which God frameth in the reasonable creature, man and angels. Of angels we are not to speak, though theirs and man's differed not much in nature at their creations.

Created righteousness of man is of two sorts:

(i) Legal righteousness is that which the moral law prescribeth. (ii) Evangelical righteousness, that which the gospel hath revealed.

(i) Of legal righteousness, I find there are three sorts spoken of:

(a) One that is a perfect righteousness.

(b) One that is a civil righteousness.

(c) One that is an inward righteousness.

(a) Perfect legal righteousness is the perfect fulfilling of the law in a man's own self. And by this shall no man living be justified before God; for no man since the fall of Adam is able perfectly to fulfil the

law. If any can, then shall he be righteous by it, but none did nor ever can; therefore no man shall stand righteous by perfect legal righteousness in himself. Some will object, But a regenerate man may, for he is restored by grace, therefore though by Adam's fall a man is disabled, yet by regeneration he is enabled to fulfil the Law perfectly.

I answer, It were so, if they were perfectly sanctified in their regeneration; but they are sanctified but in part, and it is not perfect until death.

Objection: (1 Thess 5:23) We are sanctified throughout, spirit, soul and body. If all those, what then remains unsanctified? Therefore our sanctification is perfect. I answer, It is perfect in parts, but not in measure nor degree. As a child is a perfect man in all the parts of a man, but not in the quantity of any part; so a child of God is perfectly sanctified in all parts, but not in the measure of any part until flesh, and mortality, and corruption have an end.

Secondly, some may object, the virgin Mary sinned not. I answer, So teacheth the church of Rome, that she never sinned, that her life was free from actual sins, and her conception from original sin. But so taught neither the scripture, nor God's church; but contrariwise, it is more than manifest that she was a sinner. For first, she confesseth, her soul rejoiced in God her Saviour; but if she were no sinner, she stood in need of no Saviour. Again, she died; but if she had not sinned, she should in justice not have died. For death entered by sin, and where no sin is, there death is not due. Thus no man can be righteous by the perfect righteousness of the Law, in himself.

(b) Secondly, there is a civil righteousness, and that is, when a man in his outward actions is conformable to the law, especially to the commandments of the second table. For example, he is free from the

outward actions of murder, adultery or thievery and such like; or he can refrain his anger and overcome his passions that they shall not break out to open violence to the view of the world; and for the first table, he comes to church and professeth religion. All this is a civil righteousness, and by this can no man be justified, nor made righteous.

For first, it is not a perfect, but a most imperfect righteousness, and therefore cannot justify. It is so imperfect that it is as good as none at all in God's sight; for it is but an outward and constrained and dissembled obedience, and wants the inward and true obedience of the heart and soul.

Secondly, it cannot make a man righteous; for wicked men have it which are unrighteous, and cannot be saved. Haman hated Mordecai in his heart; yea, his heart boiled in malice against him; yet the story saith, that nevertheless he restrained himself till he came home (Esth. 5:10). And therefore Christ saith, that except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20). Now what was theirs but an outward civil righteousness, whereby they kept the law only in outward actions? As appeareth in that Christ afterward, in the same chapter, expounding the law, doth reduce it to the inward, which is to his full and proper sense. So then, yet we have not found that righteousness which may make a man righteous.

(c) Thirdly, there is a righteousness called the inward righteousness of a Christian man, which is this: a man having repented, and his sins being forgiven, he is by the Holy Ghost sanctified inwardly in his soul, and all the parts and powers of it. This sanctification is called inward righteousness. Now the church of Rome saith that a man may be justified by this. But it is not so, as appears by these reasons: First,

this righteousness is in this life imperfect; and this is proved by the apostle, where he saith, We do here know but in part (1 Cor. 13:12). Therefore our understanding is but in part regenerate; and as it, so consequently all other parts or powers of our soul are but in part regenerate; and in them all, we are partly spirit and partly flesh (Gal. 5:17). Therefore if our sanctification be imperfect, it cannot justify us. Again, this righteousness is mingled with sin and unrighteousness; and from this mixture comes the combat between the flesh and the spirit (spoken of in Gal. 5:17), for these two are contrary one to the other.

If it be mingled with sin, then it cannot make us righteous; no, not the works of grace that come from it, though God in mercy reward them. And though as St James saith, they justify our flesh and make us just before men (Jam. 2:21), yet can they not justify us before God's justice; nor at the bar of the last judgment will they pass for payment. St Paul saith (1 Cor. 4:4), I know nothing by myself, yet am I not thereby justified; that is, I have so walked in my calling, since I was an apostle and minister of the gospel, as I am not privy nor guilty to myself of any negligence therein. If he dare not stand to that, to be justified by it, who dare take hold when he refuseth? Again, no man can do any perfect good works unless he be perfectly just; for how can perfection come out of imperfection? But no man can be perfectly just in this sinful body, as is proved in the first reason; therefore his works here in this life cannot be such as may make him righteous.

But it may be objected, Though our works have some defects in them, yet God's mercy accepts them for righteous and just; and therefore they may justify us. I answer: As God's mercy accepts them, so must His justice be satisfied also; but they being imperfect, cannot satisfy His justice; for God's infinite justice requires perfect

satisfaction. But as for our best works, as they are done by us, weigh them in the balance of God's justice, and they are so light, as they deserve damnation; yet in God's mercy in Christ, their defects are covered, and they are reputed good works, and are rewarded; but we encroach upon God's mercy, and abuse His justice, if therefore we imagine they should deserve God's mercy, or be able to justify us in His sight. Thus then, seeing that legal righteousness faileth us, let us come to Evangelical.

(ii) Evangelical righteousness is that that is revealed in the gospel, and should never have been revealed, if that of the Law could have saved us. But when it (not by defect in it, bur default in ourselves) could not, then God in mercy affordeth us another in the gospel.

Evangelical righteousness is that that is in Christ Jesus; His it is, that must make a man righteous before God. But this Christ was an extraordinary person, consisting of two natures, Godhead and manhood. And accordingly, He hath a double righteousness in His holy person:

First, as He is God, He hath in His nature the righteousness of God, and that is uncreated and infinite; and therefore incommunicable; and so none is, nor can be, righteous by it.

Secondly, there is in Christ a righteousness of His humanity; and this, though it be finite and created, yet it is beyond measure in comparison of the righteousness of man or angel; so saith St John (John 3:34), God giveth not Him the Spirit by measure.

This righteousness of Christ, as man or Mediator, consisteth in two things:

(1.) In the purity of His nature.

(2.) In the perfection of His obedience.

(1.) The first branch of our Mediator's righteousness is the holiness of His humanity; which was perfectly sanctified in His conception, by the powerful operation of the Godhead; and this was done at the first instant of His conception in the virgin's womb. From this purity of nature proceedeth His obedience, which was as perfect as His nature was pure; and so pure a nature made a plain way to perfect obedience. And therefore as His conception was free from original sin, so was His whole life from the least actual sin.

(2.) Now the Mediator's obedience was double: Active and Passive. And both these He performed in His own person.

His passive obedience was His passion, or suffering of whatsoever the justice of God had inflicted on man for sin, whether for soul or body.

The active obedience of the Mediator's person, was His perfect fulfilling of the moral law, in all duties to God or man, in thought, word or deed; and all this for us in our stead and on our behalf. And here is true righteousness, for where the nature of any person is perfectly pure, and the obedience perfect, the righteousness of that person is perfect. And I say all this was done by Him for us; He suffered all we should have suffered, and suffered not; He did that which we should have done, and did not. And this is that righteousness by which a sinner is made righteous before God. For seeing legal righteousness cannot, it is this that must. And now we have found that righteousness by which Noah and all holy men were made and counted righteous; namely, that that is resident in the holy person of Jesus Christ the Mediator.

And yet this is above and beyond all reason, that one should be justified by another's righteousness; and the doctrine, though it be of God, and grounded never so strongly on God's Word, yet hath it enemies, and is mightily opposed by the church of Rome. Therefore let us first prove it; and then answer the objections to the contrary.

(a) We prove it thus:

First, from plain Scripture (2 Cor. 5:21), He that knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. What can be said plainer? He was made sin for us, and we righteousness by Him. Therefore as Christ was no sinner in His own person, but our sins were laid upon Him, and so He was made a sinner by our sins; so though we be not righteous in our own persons, yet having Christ's righteousness imputed to us, we are made righteous by His righteousness.

Again, the righteousness that must save us, must be the righteousness of man and God; as in the aforementioned place it is said that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ. But no man's own righteousness can make him the righteousness of God, nor can God's righteousness be the righteousness of man; therefore it remaineth that only Christ, being both God and man, hath in Him that righteousness which may make a man the righteousness of God.

Thirdly, the Scripture saith, Christ is the end of the law to all that believe (Rom. 10:4). The end of the law, that is, not the taker away, or abrogater of the law, but the fulfiller of it; as the abrogater of the ceremonial, so the fulfiller of the moral law. If he fulfilled the law, for whom was it? Not for Himself. For as the Messiah was not slain for Himself (Dan. 9:26), so He obeyed not the law for Himself. For whom then? For all that believe. Therefore Christ doing it for them, they fulfil the law in Christ; and so Christ by doing, and they by

believing in Him that doth it, do fulfil the law. Now if it be not amiss to say, We do in Christ fulfil the law; no more it is to say, We are made righteous by Christ's righteousness; though it be His, and not ours, only by faith.

(b) Let us then see (in the second place) what the church of Rome object against it.

They first object thus: As a man cannot be wise by another man's wisdom, nor rich by another man's riches, nor strong by another man's strength; so can he not be righteous by another man's righteousness.

I answer, The comparison is not alike. For one man hath no propriety in another man's wisdom, strength or riches; but we have a right and propriety in Christ's righteousness. Again, the wisdom of one man cannot be the wisdom of another; because they are two persons, fully and equally distinct; but it is not so between Christ and a sinner; for every believer is spiritually, and yet truly and really, conjoined to Christ, and they make one mystical body; Christ being the head, and every true believer being a member of that body; and therefore, that which is His righteousness may be also truly ours. His, because it is in Him; and ours, because we are knit to Him. For by reason of this mystical union between Him and us, all blessings of salvation in Him as the head, are diffused into us, as His members or branches; and yet are as properly still in Him, as is the brain in the head of a man. And thus, though in sense and reason this cannot be, yet by faith and God's Spirit, the righteousness of Christ is made ours.

Secondly, they object, If this be so, then God justifieth wicked men; but God will not do so, it is against the nature of His holiness and

justice. And again, He that justifieth the wicked, is abominable to God (Prov. 17:15). Therefore, God will not do so Himself.

We answer, The ground is good, but the collection is untrue. God will not justify a wicked man, that is true; but that therefore a man cannot be justified by Christ's righteousness, is false. For God doth not justify him that hath rooting in his former sins, and weltering in his old corruptions; but him that believeth in Christ, and repenteth of his sins. And that man in his faith is justified, and in his repentance sanctified, and so he is made a new man, as St Paul saith, He that is in Christ is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). For as it is in the first conversion, God turneth nor saveth no man against his will; but first makes him willing by His own work alone, and then converteth and saveth him with his own free will working together with God's grace. So it is in the work of justification; God justifieth no wicked man, but makes him first just and righteous in and by Christ, and then accounts him so. But then (will some say) the sinner hath no righteousness but that of Christ's; and that is in Christ and not in himself; therefore he hath none in his own person; how then can he be anything but a wicked man still? I answer, That is not true, that is first affirmed. The believing sinner hath more righteousness than that that is in Christ. That which justifieth him, is in Christ's person; but the sinner, when he is justified, is also sanctified by the mighty work of God's grace; and so he is made a holy man, and doth good and holy works, because he is in Christ, though his sanctification be imperfect. To this end, saith St Peter (Acts 15:9), Faith purifieth a man's heart; for it is impossible a man should believe, and so be justified, but he must also be sanctified in his heart and life. Thus a sinner is justified by Christ's righteousness, inherent in Christ Himself; and sanctified by Christ's righteousness, diffused from Christ into the sinner. And therefore his justification is perfect, because that that justifieth him is still in Christ; but his sanctification

is imperfect, because that that sanctifieth us is in ourselves; the one imputed to us, the other infused and inherent.

Again, I answer, that if we take it in the sense of Scripture, it is true, that God justifieth a wicked man, for St Paul saith (Rom. 4:5), To him that worketh not, but believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness. See, God justifieth the ungodly; but how? Even as we heard before; not him that is ungodly after, but before he be justified; him that by nature, and in himself is ungodly, God justifieth by working in him faith and repentance; by which, of an ungodly man he is made a man justified and sanctified.

Their last objection is: If a sinner be righteous by Christ's righteousness, then Christ is a sinner by his sin; for there is the same reason of both. But Christ is no sinner, but the holy of holiest; and St Paul saith, He knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21), and Himself for Himself challengeth His enemies, Which of you can reprove me of sin? (John 8:46). If then our sins cannot make Him a sinner, no more can His righteousness make us righteous.

I answer, Here we grant all, if they speak the words of the Scripture; for Christ was a true and reputed sinner, in the sight of God's justice, as he that becomes surety for another is a debtor in his room, or as he that undertakes for a man, body for body, must answer for him, his own body for his; so in all reason and justice, Christ, though He had no sins of His own, yet being our surety, and undertaking for us, and standing in our stead, our sins are justly accounted His. And as for these places, and many more like, that are all understood of personal sins; from all which, and the least contagion thereof, He was perfectly free. And therefore the same place that saith, He knew no sins (that is, in and for His own person, knew not what sin was),

saith also, that for us and in our stead, He was made even sin itself, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Thus Christ, in Himself more righteous than all men and angels, in our stead is a reputed sinner; and by the same reason we (most unrighteous in ourselves) are clothed with Christ's righteousness, and thereby are reputed righteous. And as Christ (though no sinner in Himself), by being a sinner in our stead, and having our sins imputed unto Him, became subject to the wrath of God, and bare it even to death itself; so we, though not righteous of ourselves, yet having Christ's righteousness imputed unto us, are made thereby partakers of God's love; and for the worthiness of that righteousness of His, so made ours, shall be glorified in heaven. And thus now at last we have found that true, and that only righteousness, which can make a man, as it did Noah, righteous in God's sight. Now it remains to make use of it.

Uses:

(i) First, here we learn how foully our nature is defiled with sin, and stained with corruption; the stain whereof cannot be washed away with all the water in the world; no, nor with the blood of all creatures; no, nor covered with the righteousness of all men and angels, but only with the righteousness of God. And that Son of God also, if He will apply that righteousness unto us, and make it effectual, must become man, and live, and die, and rise again for us. A marvellous thing is it, and worthy of our often consideration; that all the angels and men in the world cannot make one sinner righteous; but that God's Son must needs do it; and that our sins are so hideous, as that nothing can hide the filthiness thereof from the eyes of God's justice, but only the glorious mercy seat of Christ's righteousness. This may therefore teach us how to esteem of ourselves, and our own natures.

(ii) Furthermore, see here the great goodness of God to man. God put perfect legal righteousness in Adam's heart in his creation; he received it for himself and us, and lost it for himself and us. God in mercy purposing to restore man, thus by himself lost and cast away, gives him another, and a better righteousness than before. But because He saw man so ill a keeper of his own jewels, He trusts not him with it, but sets the righteousness in the person of Jesus Christ, and commits it to Him to keep. Who as He truly knows the full value and excellency thereof, and as He dearly loves us; so He will most safely keep it for us, and clothe us with it in His Father's presence at the last day. A point of unspeakable comfort to God's children, to consider that their salvation is not in their own keeping, where it might again be lost; but in a safe hand, where they shall be sure to find and have it, when they have most need of it; and to remember that their righteousness being in Christ, they cannot lose it. For though they sin, and so lose often the comfort of a good conscience for a time; yet they then lose not their righteousness, which is then in Christ; and to consider that when in this world they suffer losses or injuries, or lose all they have upon earth; that yet their righteousness (the riches of their soul) is then in heaven full safe in Christ's keeping, and shall never be lost. This should make us learn to know Christ more and more, and to give Him the love and affections of our very hearts, that so we may be able to say with blessed Paul (1 Tim. 1:12), I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.

(iii) Lastly, if there be such a communion between Christ and a believer, that our sins are made His, and His righteousness made ours; this may teach us patience, and minister us comfort in all outward afflictions or inward temptations; because it is certain that all our sufferings are His, and He is touched with all the wrongs done to us. When He was in heaven, He calls to Saul (Acts 9:4), Saul, Saul,

why persecutest thou me? And at the last day (Matt. 25:45). Whatsoever either good or evil was done to any of His children, He saith, was done to Himself; and accordingly it shall be rewarded as done to Him.

And thus we have taught that true righteousness, which justifies a sinner, and made Noah righteous; and we see the use of that worthy doctrine. And in this first point we have the longer insisted, because it is one of the fundamental points of Christian religion.

Hitherto of the first point, namely, what that righteousness is, which is here spoken of.

2. The second point to be considered in these words is, that this righteousness is that righteousness which is by faith.

It is so called because faith is the proper instrument created in the soul of man by the Holy Ghost, to apprehend that righteousness, which is in the person of Christ; nor can it be any ways else either apprehended or applied; and therefore it is worthily called, that righteousness which is by faith; that is, which by faith is made a man's own, or whereunto a man hath title by his faith. Here therefore two points offer themselves to our observation:

(1). That true faith apprehends properly this true righteousness.

(2). That only faith can do it.

(1). For the first, it is proved by apparent evidences of Scripture: St Paul tells the Galatians (Gal. 3:14), They received the promise of the Spirit by faith. And St John saith (John 1:12), that as many as received Christ, to them He gave power to be called the Sons of God. And lest any man should think that to receive Christ is not to believe

in Christ; he addeth, Even to as many as believe in His name. And therefore faith is fitly compared to a hand that takes hold on a garment, and applieth it to the body, being naked; or to a beggar's hand that takes or receives a king's alms; so faith in a man's soul takes hold on Christ's righteousness (which is the merciful and liberal alms of the king of heaven), and applieth it to the poor and naked soul of the believer.

If any man ask, How can faith apply Christ to the believer? I answer: As a man, being in his corrupt nature, hath nothing to do with Christ; so contrariwise, when the Holy Ghost hath wrought faith in his heart by a supernatural operation; then we are to know, that as faith is the proper instrument to apprehend Christ; so is Christ and His righteousness the proper object for faith to work upon. For though it apprehend and apply all other promises which God makes to our souls or bodies; yet most properly and principally, and in the first place, it apprehends the promise of salvation, and the righteousness of Christ. Now for the particular manner, how faith does thus; we are to know that though it be spiritual and invisible, and not so easily expressed to sense, yet it is done as properly by faith, as a garment is by the hand taken and applied to the body, or a plaister to a sore.

If any ask further, But when may a man know whether his faith hath apprehended and applied Christ's righteousness to his soul or no?

I answer, When he believeth particularly that Christ's righteousness is his righteousness, and hath reconciled him to God, and shall justify him in God's presence, then doth faith work his true and proper work; for this cannot be done but by faith; and where faith is, this must needs be done.

(2). The second point is, that faith alone, and no other virtue, nor spiritual power in man's soul, is able to do this. And this may be

proved by comparing it with all the principal virtues of the soul; for amongst all these are none that may come into comparison with faith, but hope and love; both which, especially love, have their several and special excellencies; yet have neither of them, nor both of them, this virtue to apprehend and apply Christ's righteousness. This property of love is to extend itself, and with itself to carry many passions or affections of the heart, and to place them upon the thing that is loved; yet cannot love be said properly to apprehend Christ; for He must needs be apprehended before He can be loved. And the proper action of hope is to wait and expect for a blessing to come; so hope waits for salvation, but properly apprehends it not. For salvation must first be believed, and then hoped or expected; so saith Jeremiah (Lam. 3:26), It is good both to trust and to wait for the salvation of the Lord. To trust, that is to believe assuredly it will come (there is the action of faith), and to wait till it do come (that is the action of hope). Thus we see the several natures and actions of these two worthy virtues. But the proper action of faith is to apprehend and lay hold on Christ and His righteousness, and to apply them to a man's own soul; and that being done, then come love and hope, and do their duties. And so, though love lasts longer than faith doth, yet faith is before love, and makes the way for it.

To conclude this second point: faith is a hand to take hold on Christ and His benefits; love is a hand to give out tokens of faith both to God and man; for (1 Cor. 13:5), love seeketh not her own, but others good; namely, the good of them that are loved. Hope is an eye looking out, and waiting for the good things promised. So that as faith is the hand of the soul, so love is the hand and hope is the eye of faith; love the hand whereby it worketh, and hope the eye whereby it waiteth and looketh for the performance of such things as faith hath apprehended and believed. If the church of Rome think this any wrong to this holy virtue of love, to be the hand of faith; let them

know it is not ours, it is the doctrine of the apostle, where he saith, Faith worketh by love (Gal. 5:6). If faith works by it, then surely love is the hand of faith. Thus faith worketh by love, waiteth by hope, but believeth by itself.

And for this cause, the righteousness that makes us righteous before God, is rather called the righteousness of faith, than of any other Christian virtue or grace of the Spirit. And for the same cause is it, that often in St Paul's epistles, it is called by the same name, (Phil 3:9).

3. The third and last point concerning Noah's faith is that Noah was made heir of this righteousness. A special commendation of his faith; it made him heir of true and saving righteousness; that is, it gave him a true title unto it, and made him heir-apparent of that glory which it assureth everyone that apprehends it by this true faith; and so he was made as certainly, and as truly partaker of it, as the young prince is assured of his crown and kingdom at his time; or the heir of his father's lands.

Here two most worthy doctrines do offer themselves to our view:

(1). The excellency of faith.

(2). The excellency of a Christian man's estate.

(1). The excellency of faith appears thus: it makes a holy man assured and certain of his salvation by Christ Jesus. The church of Rome saith that it is presumption in any man to think so, unless he have an extraordinary revelation; but we learn from the Scripture, if a man have true faith, that is able to assure him of salvation. For faith makes him an heir of true righteousness, and of salvation thereby. Now we know, the heir is most sure and certain of his inheritance;

whatever he gets or loseth, he is sure of that. But this righteousness and salvation by it, is his inheritance, therefore he may be, and is by faith, assured of it. The papists therefore do wrong unto this doctrine, and derogate from the dignity of true faith; but this is their custom, they will extol anything rather than that which the holy Scriptures so much extolleth; namely, true faith. For if they knew what it is truly to know Christ, and to believe in Him by that faith which worketh by love, they would then know that faith makes a man heir of happiness, and therefore most assured of it.

(2). Secondly, here we may see the excellency of a Christian man's estate; he is not naked, nor destitute of comfort; but is heir of a glorious inheritance by means of his faith; and a Christian man's inheritance is Christ's righteousness. Out of which we learn:

(i) First, that no man by any good works done by or in himself, can merit true and justifying righteousness. The Pharisaical papists teach so; but their conceit is here overthrown by the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. For saving righteousness is his inheritance; which, we know, is always gotten by the father, and descends from the father to the son, as a free token of his love. And it were scornful and absurd to see a son offer to buy his inheritance from his father; it being against the nature of an inheritance to come any other way but by free gift from the father to the son. Therefore our righteousness that must save us, being as we see here our inheritance, let us resolve of it, we cannot buy nor merit it.

(ii) Again, here is sure and solid comfort against all the griefs and crosses and losses of this world; God's children must needs have their portion of afflictions in this life; but here is their comfort: they may lose their goods, livings, possessions, their good names, their health, their lives; but their inheritance standeth sure and firm, and

cannot be lost. Let them therefore here learn not to grieve out of measure; for a holy man may say thus to himself, and that most truly: My Father may frown on me for my faults, and chastise me for my sins; but I am sure He will not disinherit me; for I am heir by faith of Christ's righteousness; and I may lose many things, but I shall not lose that.

(iii) Thirdly, and lastly, here must God's children learn their duties. They are heirs to a godly and glorious inheritance; and Christ's righteousness is their inheritance, therefore they must learn to see and settle all their affections on this inheritance. For, there is nothing in the world more worthy to be affected than a fair inheritance.

We must therefore first labour above all worldly things for this inheritance; namely, to be made partakers of this righteousness. This is that pearl which we, having found, must sell all we have to buy it. And when we have gotten it, we must care to keep it, and therefore must lay it up in our very hearts and souls; and keeping it, we must rejoice and delight in it above the world, and all the pleasures of it.

This is the glorious portion which our God and Father leaveth us as His children. What should all the care of our hearts be, but to prefer it? Naboth had a vineyard, that came to him from his father by inheritance; Ahab the king would give him money, or a better vineyard for it; but Naboth would not; Nay (saith he), God forbid I should sell my father's inheritance (1 Kin. 21:3). If he made such account of an earthly inheritance, what should we of the heavenly? If he of a poor vineyard, what should we of the glory of heaven? If he denied the king to sell it for a better, should not we deny the devil, to leave our part in Christ and His righteousness for the world, or anything that he can promise us? In all such temptations, our answer

should be, God forbid I should sell away my inheritance, which my God and Father gave me. Thus did blessed Paul, who esteemed the world and all in it, dung and dross, that he might win Christ, and be made partaker of that righteousness (Phil. 3:8). So must we (if we will be worthy of this inheritance) prize and value it above this world, and think basely of all the pomp and pleasures of this world in comparison of it; and rather be content to lose the world than to leave it.

And lastly, when we have it, and are thus careful to preserve it; where should our content, joy and delight be, but in this our inheritance? So doth the heir; nothing so rejoiceth him as to think of his inheritance. Here therefore the madness of carnal men is discovered, who rejoice exceedingly in the honours, profits and pleasures of this life (as swine in their bellies) and never go further. But alas, this is not their inheritance, if they look to have their souls saved. Therefore herein they shew themselves to be void of all grace, and of all hope of a better world. For if they had, they would rejoice in it, and not in the vain and transitory delights of this world, which perish in the using, and are lost with more torment and vexation, than they were kept with delight. We must learn then to use this world, as though we used it not (1 Cor. 7:31). And if the Lord vouchsafe us any portion of pleasures in this world, we must take it thankfully, as above our inheritance (and must therefore use it lawfully and soberly); but have our hearts, and the joy of them, upon our inheritance, which is in heaven, whereof we are made heirs by faith; and wherein we are made heirs with this blessed Noah, who was made heir of that righteousness which is of faith.

And thus we have heard the most glorious commendation of Noah's faith; and of Noah by his faith, and of all the examples before the flood.

Now follow the second sort of examples, namely, such as lived in the second world, after the flood.

They are all of two sorts: either such as lived before the giving of the law, or after.

Before the giving of the law, here are many whereof, as of all the other kinds, some are men, some women.

The first of those blessed men after the flood, whose faith is here renowned, is Abraham, that great father; of whom, and whose faith, because he was a father of so many faithful, more is spoken than of anyone.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.” Hebrews 11:8.

Concerning holy Abraham, here are more examples than one recorded, and his faith is renowned many ways; more verses are spent of him than of some five others. And the reason is, because his faith was more excellent than any others that followed him. In which regard, he is called the father of the faithful, oftentimes in the New Testament, especially in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians.

The first example of his faith (and the fourth in order of the whole) is of his leaving his own native country, and how at God’s commandment he went he knew not whither; only he knew God called him, and therefore he would go; wherein appeared a most worthy faith.

Now concerning this his faith and obedience, the text layeth down two points:

I. The cause or ground thereof; which was God’s calling; he was called of God.

II. The fruit, or effect of his faith; he hearkened and obeyed. And this his obedience is amplified by divers particulars:

1. The matter of it; he went out of his country.

2. The end; to take possession of a country, which he should not enjoy of a long time.

3. The manner; he went out, not knowing whither he should go.

I. The first point is the cause or ground of Abraham's faith in this action, and is laid down in the first words:

By faith Abraham, when he was called.

This story is taken out of Genesis 12. The cause of Abraham's faith is God's calling. God's calling is an action of God, whereby He appointeth a man to some certain condition, or state of life, in this world, or after this life. And in this regard, God is compared to a general in the field which assigneth every soldier his standing and duty; so doth God appoint every man his place and duty in the church.

Concerning these callings, let us see 1. the means how He calleth, and 2. the several states whereto he calleth men.

1. For the means or manner, God calleth men two ways: (1) immediately, or (2) by means.

(1). Sometimes immediately by Himself and His own voice; as, the extraordinary prophets in the Old Testament, and the apostles in the New. So saith St Paul of himself, he was called to be an apostle, not of men, nor by men, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father (Gal. 1:1).

(2). Sometimes mediately by men directed by Himself, and furnished, or enabled, for that duty; and so were called the ordinary prophets and priests of the Old; and the evangelists, pastors and doctors of the New Testament. The first was extraordinary, this is ordinary; the first is for an unbelieving or misbelieving people; the

second is for an ordinary and established church. Now, of these two ways, God called Abraham immediately by Himself from heaven.

2. Secondly, for the estates of life whereunto God calleth men, there are three: (1) general, (2) particular and (3) personal.

(1). God's general calling is, whereby He calleth all men to repentance by the gospel, and so to life eternal. Of this speaks the apostle (Rom. 8:30), Whom God predestinated, them also He called; and also (Rom. 11:29), The calling of God is without repentance. Hereby He calls men in this life to the state of grace, and to the state of glory in heaven; and this is to all.

(2). His particular calling is, when He calleth and assigneth men to some particular estate and duty in family, church or commonwealth; as when a man is called to be a magistrate, minister, master of a family, lawyer, physician etc.

(3). Thirdly, God calleth some men to some private, personal duty, which He designeth not to others, but to be done by them alone. Such a calling had He assigned him that would needs be perfect; Go, sell all that thou hast etc. (Matt. 19:21).

Now the calling of Abraham in this place, is to be referred to this third kind. For it was a private and personal calling to leave his country, his kindred, his lands, his possessions, and to go seek another; and to be the father of the faithful, and to receive the covenant; and this duty belongs to none but who shall personally and by name be called unto it.

Yet all these three callings may concur in one, as here in him. For he was called to be a Christian (for the general) and a governor of a great family (for the particular calling); but that, that is in this place

understood, is the extraordinary and personal calling to leave his country. And in it we are to consider three circumstances:

1. Who was called

2. When

3. How he was called.

1. For the first, Abraham was called the son of Terah; but neither his father Terah, nor his brother Nahor were called, but Abraham only.

But it may worthily be demanded why God should not call his father and kindred; there can be no other answer but this that the apostle giveth (Rom. 9:18), God hath mercy on whom He will, and withholdeth it from whom he will. He calleth Isaac, and refuseth Ishmael; loveth Jacob, and hateth Esau; taketh Abel, and leaveth Cain; even because He will, and for no other cause that we know. But why then calls He Abraham, and not his kindred? Is not this partiality? I answer, He is tied to none, He might refuse all, therefore the marvel is that He calls any. But why some and not other, why Abraham and not his kindred, no reason can be given; for God's judgments are wonderful. But as that that is impossible with man, is possible with God; so that that is injustice or partiality with man, is justice with God. And it is extreme folly, and intolerable presumption, for us to weigh God's actions in the balance of our shallow reason.

2. For the second; But when was Abraham called? For the time, there are two circumstances worth the observation:

(1). First, Abraham was called to this dignity when he lived in his country with his fathers. So saith Joshua (Josh. 24:2), Thus saith the

Lord, Your fathers dwelt beyond the flood in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and served other gods. If Abraham was called by God when he was an idolater, then it was apparent he had not purchased God's favour by his works. Where we learn that the whole work of a man's salvation is to be ascribed to God's mere mercy; who (as the prophet saith) was found of them that sought Him not (Isa. 65:1). Abraham never dreamed of the true God, nor of any new covenant of grace and salvation, when God called him. And so when Paul was going armed with bloody fury, and his fury armed with commissions and authority against the saints, then God from heaven called him; and of a persecutor, made him the principal instrument of His glory (Acts 9:2ff.). Therefore (to apply this to ourselves) if God have vouchsafed us the same grace, and taken us to be His people, and made a covenant of salvation with us, who in former times had been sinners of the Gentiles; we must learn here to see whence this favour is, and therefore to ascribe nothing to ourselves, but give all the glory unto God.

And particularly, for every one of us; if God hath been so merciful to any of us, as when we were popish or superstitious with our parents or kindred, to open our eyes and bring us home to His holy truth; or when we weltered in wickedness and sensuality with the profane world, to touch our hearts; and to call us to grace and sanctification; let us often remember and freely acknowledge this His undeserved mercy, and say with the holy prophet, Unto thee belongeth mercy, but unto us open shame (Dan. 9:8,9).

(2). Secondly, for the time when Abraham was called, it was when he was 75 years of age or thereabouts, as is manifest in the story (Gen. 12:4). Therefore we see that God for a long time let him lie in his blindness and idolatry ere He called him. It is more likely that Abraham in the meantime lived civilly, and followed learning and

other civil courses; and in that time it is likely he attained to that measure of knowledge in astronomy and other learning, for which he is renowned in old writers. But this was the first time he was called to know and serve the true God in His true service.

Here we learn that though a man perseveres in his sins for a long time, and passes his best years in vanity without repentance, and thereby be in a grievous and fearful estate; yet true believers and penitent men must not therefore judge them castaways. For God's mercy calls a man in his old age, and toucheth the heart when it pleaseth Him. Christ in the parable called some at the eleventh hour (Matt. 20:6), and so God calleth men to grace in their old age. We must therefore spare these sharp and unsavoury censures which some unadvisedly cast upon such men; for charity thinketh not evil (1 Cor. 13:5), where it may think or suppose any possibility of good; but contrariwise pray for them, and hope of their conversions, because we know that at what time soever a sinner repents of his sin, God will forgive him.

And yet for all this, men must not presume to live carelessly in their sins, for that is desperately to tempt God; but must follow the holy counsel of Solomon (Eccl.12:1), to remember their Creator in the days of their youth; and to turn unto God when they have means, lest God take away the means, and with the means His favour from them. Abraham was not called until he was old; but when he was called, he hearkened and obeyed; so must thou when God calls thee by afflictions or by His Word, then answer and obey as Abraham did; or else Abraham's calling in his old age will be little comfort to thee. Thus much for the time.

3. Thirdly, for the manner of his calling, it is laid down in the story of Genesis, to be in an earnest kind of counsel, Go out, saith God, from

thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee; where it is to be observed, He saith not barely Go, or come forth; but He amplifieth, and urgeth it with many words and circumstances.

If any ask why God did so, when He might have given the commandment in one word; I answer, the reason is that Abraham might have cause more seriously to consider of God's calling, and to imprint it more deeply in his heart; lest at the first brunt he should have obeyed, and afterward have shrunk back. For it was doubtless that this calling was harsh to reason, and that Abraham found many hindrances, and therefore it were dangerous he would have started back after some trial of these difficulties he must pass through, if he had but a bare call and commandment to go. But when God saith to him, Go out of thy native country, let it not stay thee that thou wast born there, nor hinder thee that thy kindred dwells there; but leave all and come with me; forsake all and trust me; follow me into the land that I will shew thee; I take thee from one, but I will give thee another. When God, I say, useth all these, and it may be many more like words to Abraham; it is apparent He would have him furnished with strength and resolution to go through with his calling after he had once made entrance into it.

Out of which practice of God, we learn this instruction; that God would have no man enter upon any calling or duty, with a fearful and faint heart, nor with a doubtful mind; but with a strong and settled resolution to go through with it, and not to relent and repent in the midst. And for this end, God would have all men before they enter, seriously to consider the place or duty they are to undertake; for the Lord had rather a man should refuse at the first, than having entered to look back again; and it is great folly for men, hastily and suddenly, or humorously, to cast themselves upon any calling, and then upon

trial and experience of the dangers and difficulties thereof, to be weary, and wish they had never done it. Men in this world are generally wiser in matters of the world; if a man is to build a house, he will not forthwith set upon building such a house as his humour desireth, but will first of all sit down and count the cost, and then his own ability, to see if the one will counterbalance the other, else he never begins it. So saith Christ (the wisdom of God) of the wisdom of this world; and the like also He saith for war, that no prince will fight with his enemy on unequal terms, but will know himself able to sustain the encounter (Luke 14:28,31).

So the calling of a Christian is to profess the gospel of Christ. As the magistrate's is to defend it, the minister's to teach it, so all men's to profess it. Now it is as impossible to build without cost, or to fight without power of men, as to profess Christ in any calling, either general or particular, without crosses. We must therefore consider first, what our calling and profession will cost us; it is sure to cost us a dangering of our credits and estimation in the world; it may be our goods, our liberties; it may be our lives themselves. Again, what enemies we have to encounter in this spiritual warfare, the devil, death, hell, sin, corruption, and the crafty malice of wicked men; all these we are sure to meet withal. Were it not then folly for a man to undertake this profession, and not to consider thus much beforehand? The want of this is the cause why some put their hands to the plough and after shrink away, and make themselves ridiculous to their enemies, corporal and spiritual.

And for particular callings, the case even standeth so also. Some men think the calling of a magistrate, a place of honour; and therefore ambitiously plot and desire to raise themselves into authority; never remembering the burden and trouble they are sure to find. Which when they feel to be too heavy for their lazy shoulders to bear with

ease, they slowly fall to plain carelessness, and neglect all doing good in their places, and wish they had never bought honour so dear.

So others think the ministry nothing but a place of ease, exemption and preferment. And in these conceits, rush presumptuously and rashly into that holy state, never thinking beforehand of that great charge of souls they are to take, nor of that heavy account they are to make for them; nor of the hatred, and contempt, and extreme disgraces they are sure to find, if they do their duties with conscience. And therefore (when upon experience they find it so to be) they either fall to carnal courses with the world, and neglect their duties (that by these two means they may please the world), or else they continue in their duties with much grief and vexation, wishing they had chosen rather any calling than the ministry; and by either or both, do expose themselves to shame and much rebuke. Whereas, contrariwise, he that beforehand casts his account what it will cost him to be a minister, what he must undertake, what he must lose, what he is sure to find, is so settled and resolved beforehand, as he goeth through all dangers and contempts, with comfort, courage and contentment. Let us therefore all learn by this practice of God, when we think to enter upon any such duty, to reason with ourselves, as God did with Abraham, what we are to forsake, and what we are to meet withal. So shall we not afterwards repent, but go on with much assurance, as Abraham did.

This point I have the more enlarged, because it is of special use in the Christian life.

Thus much of the cause of Abraham's faith, God's calling, and all the circumstances therein.

II. The second point is the excellency and commendation thereof, commended by the fruit and effect. It made him to yield to this

calling of God. And this obedience of his faith is spoken of in two ways:

1. It is laid down generally: He obeyed God.
2. It is further commended by divers particulars, which we shall see in their places.

1. Obeyed God.

Here is the obedience of Abraham's faith laid down in one general word: He obeyed; that is, when God called him to leave his country, kindred and friends, he yielded against reason, because God bade him. When God told him He would carry him into another land, he believed it, and left a certain for an uncertain, a possession for an expectation, here was the power and excellency of his faith appearing in this obedience. From hence we learn two instructions:

(1). First, seeing Abraham the father of the faithful (Rom. 4:11) and our glory is to be children of faithful Abraham; therefore we must learn, as good children, to follow our father, in framing our lives according to God's calling; when God calleth us to any state of life, then to obey; and when not God, but the world or our own corrupt humours call us, then not to obey. For, to obey the first is the obedience of faith; but to obey the second is the obedience of our corruption. Therefore against this practice of holy Abraham, two sorts of men do offend, and thereby shew themselves children unlike their father Abraham:

(i) First, such men as being called by God to some function or duties, will not obey; for examples we have too many. To some, God saith, Leave thy private care, which is for none but thyself; be a magistrate, and undertake the public care of the commonwealth; but they, as

though they were born for themselves, will not employ themselves in public service.

To some, God saith, Leave thy case, and thy care of worldly credit; and undertake the teaching of my people, and care not for the contempt of that calling, for thou mayest save souls; but their carnal credit is more dear unto them than Abraham's kindred is to him; they will not forsake them.

These, and all that do, may make what shew they will; but they are not children of Abraham, seeing they are wanting of his faith; and they are wanting in his faith because they fail in his obedience; they must therefore learn to yield when God calleth, and not to stand upon such base allegations of worldly matters; when Abraham left country and kindred to obey God.

(ii) Secondly, such men as respect not God's calling, but look what the swing of their natures or the course of the wicked world carry them unto, they presently yield and obey, not regarding whether it be God's calling or not. Three sorts of men are most faulty in this kind:

(a) First, such as are content to grow in wealth, either by oppression, as by usury and extortion; or by craft and dissembling, or by any other such indirect course whereby their brother is hurt; looking only at gain but not regarding whence it comes.

(b) Secondly, such as live by dicing, carding, or by plays and interludes, thinking any trade lawful that brings in wealth or that gets money; never caring whether God allows the calling or not.

(c) Thirdly, such as live in no calling, but spend their time in eating, drinking, sleeping and sporting, because they have livings of their own, and lands left by their parents.

All these, and all such like, do obey indeed, but whereunto? Not unto God's calling, for, alas, He never called them to these courses, but hath often recalled them from it; therefore this is the obedience not of faith, but of corruption and of the world, which is a plain disobedience unto God. For, as the wisdom of the flesh or the world is foolishness with God, so obedience to the flesh or to the world is disobedience and rebellion against God.

All such men must know that they are not the children of Abraham, because they are not children of his faith, because they practice not his obedience; for God's calling, and no other rule for our life, must Christian men admit. When He calls, they must obey; and when He calls not, or allows not a course or gaining, or a trade of life (though all the world allow it), we must not follow it; this will honour them and their profession before God. Abraham's faith justified him before God, but his obedience justified his faith; obedience, saith Samuel (1 Sam. 15:22,23), is better than sacrifice; but disobedience is as the sin of witchcraft. Therefore let all Christians prove their faith by their obedience, hanging on God's mouth, and amending on God's calling, for directions of their whole life; and resolve with David (Psa. 119:105), Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light to my path. When kings may not live but by this light of God's calling and God's word; it is shameful presumption for ordinary men to frame their lives by lights of their own making.

(2). In the second place out of Abraham's obedience, let us mark: By what means obeyed he? By faith. Learn here the true nature of true faith; it brings forth true obedience wherever it is; and therefore Christian obedience is called the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5). And these two cannot be separated, no more than light from the sun, or heat from fire. For as the sun naturally and necessarily gives light,

and the fire heat; no less doth true faith yield true obedience to God's commandments. Which being so, it teacheth us for the use:

(i) First, how our church and doctrine are slandered by the papists who please themselves in saying, We look to be saved by faith alone, and without works. For we teach that though a man be justified without respect to his works, yet no man was ever justified whose faith did not bring forth good and holy works; and we teach that none is heir of Abraham's faith which is not also of his obedience. Therefore God will reward their lying tongue.

(ii) Secondly, this teacheth us that Abraham's faith is rare in these days. Many make profession of Abraham's religion, but it seems they are as far deceived as the Jews were (John 8:39), the Jews would be Abraham's children because they were of his flesh; and men now will be so because they are of his profession; but both are far wide, for we must be children of faithful Abraham. But if we will be like him in faith, we must be like him in obedience also; when God calls us to any duty, we must forsake our own natures, and deny our own affections, and cross our own corruptions, to follow God's calling and to do our duties. So shall we be true children of Abraham, when we are like our father in his best virtues. Thus we see his obedience laid down generally.

2. Particularly, in his obedience there are laid down three points:

(1). The matter.

(2). The end.

(3). The manner,

All which are laid down in the text.

(1). For in the matter of his obedience, it followeth in these words: To go out into a place etc.

The particular matter wherein Abraham's obedience consisted was this; At God's commandment, he went out of his own country into another; for one which he should inherit, he left that which he did inherit.

Here many points of good instruction may be learned:

(i) First, see here the power and strength of true faith; it was a wonderful hard thing for Abraham to do.

(a) For first, he was well stricken in years, 75 years old. Young men delight to be stirring, but men grown in years do love to settle themselves as birds in their nests; and it is grievous unto them to think of removing or taking long journeys.

(b) Secondly, he must leave his own country, where he was bred, born and brought up; which all men generally do love by nature.

(c) Thirdly, he must leave his goods, and lands, and living, which no doubt were great for having lived so long in his native country, and being born as he was, his estate doubtless was very great.

(d) Fourthly, he must leave his acquaintances with which he had lived all his life, yea, his own kindred, and must go live amongst strangers.

These four considerations were so many hindrances to this obedience, and strong temptations to make him to have looked backward; but such is the power of his faith, he is commanded of God, therefore he obeyeth and goeth out.

The use is to teach us what a faith we have. For, if we measure all God's commandments by our natural affections, our faith is but a shadow and hypocrisy; but if we consult not with flesh and blood, but rest and rely on God's Word, and give absolute obedience to His commandments, then our faith is such as Abraham's was.

(ii) In the next place, Some may marvel why the Lord should command him so hard a matter, and lay so strait a commandment upon him as to leave his country and living, which seemed unreasonable; and his kindred, which was unnatural.

I answer, the reason is, not that God delighteth in unreasonable and unnatural courses, or in laying heavy burdens upon his children; but He did it for good and holy ends, such as:

(a) First, to prove Abraham and to see what was in him. As a friend is not tried in ordinary, but in great matters; so it is known who is God's friend in matters of difficulty. Hereby, therefore God maketh the faith and obedience of His servant to shine more gloriously.

(b) Again, to break the corruption of his heart; for our wicked natures love peace, and ease, and welfare, and heart's desire; but God will cross those courses, and send us troubles many ways, that so He may pull down the height of our corruptions, and humble us to His own hand.

The use is to teach us to make true use of our afflictions, and of those many hard crosses that must fall upon us in our course of serving God; namely, to know that they are sent from God, not as a hard-hearted or cruel judge, but as a wise and merciful Father, who wisheth our good, and who will so bless unto us the hardest and heaviest crosses that befall us in our lives (if we receive them in patience and faith) that we shall say with David (Psa. 119:71), It is

good for us that we have been in trouble; for thereby we have learned to know God and ourselves better.

(iii) Thirdly, whereas Abraham at God's commandment goeth out of his own country into another, we learn that it is not unlawful for a Christian man to go out of his own country and travel into another, and there to abide for some, or for a long time; provided his causes be good and just, as, namely, these which follow:

(a) First, if he have a particular commandment of God, as here Abraham had.

(b) Secondly, if he have a lawful calling of the church or state whereof he is a member; as if he be sent to a general council, or be sent as ambassador; either to stay for a time, or to stay there as legate.

(c) Thirdly, if it be for the safety of his life in a good cause. So Moses (Exod. 2:14,15) fled into the land of Midian, and there stayed when Pharaoh sought for his life. And Christ Himself fled with Joseph and His mother into Egypt, from the fury of Herod (Matt. 1). The like may be said for them that, to preserve their liberty, they fly from the cruelty of their creditors who will not take reasonable and honest satisfaction of a surety for another man, or of a child for the father's debts; but in no case for them who travel in purpose to defeat their creditors, or thereby to deliver themselves from payment of their due debts, being able to pay. Of both these we have example in David and his followers. David himself was fain to fly for his life from Saul's unjust cruelty, and therefore went to dwell amongst the Philistines (1 Sam. 27:1), and (1 Sam. 22:2) there came to David such as were in trouble and in debt, and these were with him in his travail and persecutions. Now doubtless, had they been ungodly men (who had

not cared how they came into debt, nor how they paid it), David would never had been their prince; as the text saith he was.

(d) Fourthly, if it be for the maintenance of pure religion, and keeping a good conscience. This hath Christ's warranty (Matt. 10:23), When they persecute you in one city, fly to another. For this cause, many of our forefathers, in the former age, were fain to fly into Germany, Switzerland and to Geneva. And for these causes, divers of other nations do repair to this nation, and are here entertained.

(e) Fifthly, if it be for the getting, or increasing of any good learning, and lawful knowledge, especially divine knowledge for matter of religion. Thus the Queen of Sheba went out of the utmost part of Africa, to Jerusalem in Asia, to see and hear Solomon (1 Kin. 10), and for that cause she is highly commended by Christ Himself (Matt. 12:42). Thus may young men travel for learning or the tongues, especially such as intend thereby to fit themselves for public service, so it be with safety of religion, and security of conscience.

(f) Sixthly, if it be for the practice of a man's lawful calling, as for traffic; and thus merchants may, and do, lawfully travel in all nations, and have their factors there resident; provided they lose not their souls, to gain for their bodies; their travelling is allowed by Christ in the parable where He saith, The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man that seeketh goodly pearls (Matt. 13:45).

(g) Seventhly, if it be to receive and take possession of any goods or lands lawfully bequeathed or fallen unto a man in another nation, as sometime it doth. This seems to be allowed by Christ in the parable, where He saith, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and so to come again (Luke 19:12).

In a word; if it be upon any good and sufficient cause, allowable in good reason, and not contrary to any part of God's Word. But as for such as leave their countries and travel into another:

Either upon levity, to see strange sights and fashions; or being malefactors, fly from their due punishment; or being in debt, go away to deceive their creditors; or being vain-glorious, to make themselves known; or being at enmity, to fight combats or to kill their enemy;

All these, and all such like, can have no comfort in their travels; for they send themselves, God sent them not; they are out of God's protection, because they go without His warrant. And as many of them as go away to escape the hand of the magistrate, let them be assured, they shall not escape the hand of God.

(iv) In the fourth place, here is a comfort for all such as are banished from their own native countries, for God and His gospel's sake. For, here, Abraham, the prince of patriarchs, was a banished man, and lived in a strange country the greater part of all his life. Let such men therefore take patiently what God layeth upon them; for it is not their misery or mishap alone, but hath been common to God's children in all ages. Again, Christ Himself pronounceth them blessed, who suffer persecution for righteousness sake; for though they be exiles from their own kingdom, or tossed up and down the kingdoms of the earth, yet theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:10).

(v) Lastly, though this commandment was personally directed to Abraham, and concerns not us as it did him; yet it hath his force and use even to us. For, though we are not to go out of our country, and leave our livings and habitations; yet we must do that that is proportionable thereunto. That which is commanded to Solomon's wife is to all Christians; Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline

thine ear, forget thine own kindred, and thy father's house; so shall the king take pleasure in thy beauty (Psa. 45:10,11). This wife of Solomon is the soul of every Christian, the spouse of Christ, the true Solomon, who by nature is daughter to heathen Pharoah, that is, to sin, corruption and wrath; but being married to Christ, must forget her own kindred and father's house, that is, their own nature and natural affections, and carnal desires; and then shall Christ our king, and spiritual husband, take pleasure in us and rejoice to do us good. And this is the chief travelling of all, and most acceptable to God, when a man goeth out of himself, and denieth his own desires to obey God and to serve Jesus Christ.

Thus we see the matter of his obedience. Now followeth the end.

(2). Which he should after receive for inheritance.

The second particular in his obedience is the end, why he went out of his own country, to inherit another, that is, the land of Canaan, called elsewhere the Land of Promise, because God promised it unto him, and to his seed. Now, Abraham at God's commandment, went out of his own native country into this place, to inherit it, and to take possession of it.

But it may be objected, He inherited it not; yea, furthermore, Stephen saith (Acts 7:5), God brought him in, but gave him no inheritance in it, no, not the breadth of a foot.

I answer, though Abraham did not inherit it personally himself, yet he may be said to inherit it two ways:

(i) Sacramentally, or mystically.

(ii) In his posterity.

(i) First, sacramentally thus: the land of Canaan is to be understood, not only as a country of Asia, fruitful and fertile, and plentiful of all good things, wherein the only visible church was confined till Christ's coming. But further, as a type of the heavenly Canaan, where the triumphant church reigns in glory with God. And this Abraham did in his own person inherit it; for he was translated from this world, after his death, into the glory of heaven. And in that respect, the glory of heaven is rather called the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16), than of any other of the patriarchs, both for the excellency of his faith, and also for that the promise of inheriting the land of Canaan was first of all (personally) made to him; which because he enjoyed it not, he was recompensed with the fruition of the true Canaan.

From hence, we learn a notable doctrine; that God in performing of His promises, giveth not oftentimes the very particular thing promised, but something equivalent, or proportionable to it, or else better. Thus in the fifth commandment, obedient children are promised by God long life, as a reward for honouring their parents. Now, when He takes them away in their best age, as he did Josiah (2 Kin. 22:20), He giveth them eternal life; which is not only proportionable, but far exceeding the thing promised. So here He promiseth Abraham the land of Canaan, but when it comes to the performance, he gives him a better, even the true Canaan, the kingdom of heaven.

The use hereof is to teach us wisdom for the true discerning of God's merciful performing of His promises; for He performeth them not always one way unto His children; sometimes He giveth the particular thing promised, as unto the children of Israel, their deliverance out of Egypt; unto Hezekiah, the restoring of his health and such like. Sometimes He giveth not it, but something which shall be as good, or better unto His children; as when they are in some

great danger and crave deliverance, or in some necessity and have promise of supply; God oftentimes delivereth them not, but gives them patience, and feeling of His favour in such sort, as is many degrees more comfortable unto them. And herein God heareth their prayers, and performeth His promise to them, to their full contentment.

(ii) Secondly, Abraham inherited Canaan in his posterity. For though God promised it to himself when he was 75 years old (Gen 12:4), and to him and to his seed (Gen. 17:7), yet neither he nor his immediate seed enjoyed it, but his posterity the Israelites 430 years after the promise, as St Paul proveth (Gal. 3:17). And so Abraham inherited it in his posterity, which is a part of him; and they inherited it many hundred years, even until the coming of Christ.

(a) As before we learned that God in the performance of His promises, giveth not always the thing promised; so here let us learn that He doth not always perform them to the same parties, and yet most truly performeth them. If therefore God doth not to ourselves, nor in our times accomplish His promises or prophecies, we must not be impatient, but wait in patience. For as the prophet saith, The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the last it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; it shall surely come, and shall not stay (Hab. 2:3). To this end David also most divinely saith (Psa. 97:11), Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. See, light and joy belongs unto them; but how? It is sown, that is, in hope and expectation, and not always in fruition. Therefore as the husbandman casts his seed into the earth, and is content to stay almost a full year without it, or any profit of it, and yet is patient all that while, because he is sure it will come, and bring increase with it; so must we wait patiently on the Lord, and know that whatsoever He hath promised, we, or ours after us, shall be sure to enjoy it. And

though we do not, what great matter is it if our children do? Or we know that oftentimes the father soweth and dieth ere the harvest, and so the son reapeth. So for God's great and gracious promises, which are sown unto the fathers; if themselves do not, their children are sure to reap the comfortable harvest of performance. And thus we see how Abraham inherited the land of Canaan, which is called the land of Promise, because it was so long, and so often promised to so many great patriarchs.

(b) In the second place it is to be observed, when God promised this unto Abraham; even then when the land of Canaan was possessed by many might kings; so that it may be here further doubted how Abraham could take any comfort in this promise, seeing it was at that day held by almost 40 kings greater and less, as we may see in Joshua chapters 10 to 12. And further, the people were many and strong; the cities were well-walled and full of huge giants (Num. 13:28,29). Yet for all this, he not only believeth and obeyeth; but as God promised, so he went to it, and took possession, and died in this faith, that God would perform His promise, and that his posterity should inherit it all, as afterward indeed they did, even from Moses to Christ. If it be asked how this could be; the answer is, that Abraham knew that God was King of Kings, and had the world and kingdoms of the world in His hand and disposition; and therefore assured himself that He could bring to pass what he had promised, and make good His word, notwithstanding all such impediments to the contrary. And as he believed, it came to pass; his posterity came to it, entered as conquerors upon this gift of God; and by the power of God, so amazed all these kings and their people, as some submitted, as the Gibeonites; and they that did not were all slain, and their countries conquered, as we may read at large in the book of Joshua; all the stories whereof are briefly comprehended by David in few words, where he saith, We have heard with our ears, our fathers

have told us, how thou O Lord, drove out the heathen with thy hand, and planted them in; how thou destroyed the people, and made them grow (Psa. 44:1,2).

Out of which we learn two instructions:

(a) First, that the change of states, and alteration of kingdoms or commonwealths, are in God's hand; and that He can turn them one way or other, as it pleaseth Him. To this purpose, saith David, in the fore-named psalm, They inherited not the land by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand and thy arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou didst favour them.

This must teach us to pray earnestly, in our daily prayers, for the good estate of this kingdom wherein we live; and of that worthy prince and queen under whose government we have been so long, and so liberally blessed. For the welfare and prosperity, the certainty and security of it and her, is not in our policy, might, munition, ships; nor in the strength of our navy, nor in the power of our armour, nor in the chivalry of our people, nor in the wisdom of our counsel (though for all these we are a people honoured of our friends, and feared of our enemies); but in the mighty hand of our God, who (as David saith) beareth rule over the kingdoms of the earth, and giveth them to whomsoever he will (Dan. 4:32).

Seeing therefore the King of heaven is the giver and establisher, the remover and changer, of kingdoms of the earth; let us assure ourselves that the prayers of Elisha are the horses and chariots of Israel (2 Kin. 13:14). And surely if Elisha for his prayer was acknowledged by the king himself, to be his father; then doubtless the godly ministers, and such other in our church as pray daily for the peace of our Jerusalem, are worthy to be accounted good children of our church, and worthy members of our state.

(b) Secondly, here we learn what is the ruin of kingdoms, and overthrow of estates; namely, sin and ungodliness. This is most apparent in the present example. For, why did God take this land from the Canaanites, and give it to Abraham and his seed? The stories of the Old Testament answer: Nothing but sin. In Deuteronomy, Moses chargeth the Israelites that they do not after the abominations of the heathen Canaanites; For, saith he, because of their abominable sins, God did cast them out before you (Deut. 18:9,12). And why did God not give it instantly to Abraham to inherit after the promise? Even because the wickedness of these Amorites was not then full (Gen. 15:16), that is, their sins were not then ripe. For we must know that, though God be the absolute and sovereign Lord of all kingdoms, and may dispose them as He will; yet He rather exerciseth His justice than His power; and never overturneth any state but upon cause of their apparent sinfulness. Nor can the Amorites or Canaanites plead herein any hard measure; for the same God dealt afterwards in the same justice with His own people, giving the kingdom of Judah to the Chaldeans, and Israel to the Assyrians; and the cause is laid down most memorably In 2 Kings 17:11-19: When the Israelites sinned against the Lord their God, and walked after the fashions of the heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before them; and did secretly things that were wicked, and made images, and served idols; and though God warned them by His prophets, yet would they not obey, but hardened their necks, and so finally left all the commandments of God; then the Lord was exceeding wrath with Israel, and cast them also out of His sight. Thus sin is able to overturn kingdoms, be they Canaanites, Israelites, or whosoever.

Let this teach us all to look to our lives, and make conscience of all sin; especially great, and capital, and crying sins; for the sins of a people are worms and cankers, eating out the life and strength of a commonwealth. And let our state and government learn here to look

to the reformation of our people, especially for great sins. For open profaneness, or uncleanness, or oppressions, or injustice, or extortions, or cruelties, and exactions; all these, or any of these sins, reigning in a state, are able to overturn the best established kingdom on the earth, and will at last (do power and policy what they can) make the land spew out her inhabitants; and in the meantime (let the wily wits of men judge as they list) it will prove true, that the sinful and profane man is the worst, and the godly and conscionable man the best friend to a state, and best subject in a kingdom.

Thus much for the second point in Abraham's obedience; namely, the end of it.

(3). The third and last point is the manner of his obedience; which followeth in these words:

And he went out, not knowing whither he went.

The manner of this his leaving his country, in man's reason would seem strange; nay, the world will condemn it for plain foolishness, for a man to leave a certainty for an uncertainty. But it may be here doubted how the apostle can here say that he knew not whither he went; seeing that these words are not in the story of the Old Testament. Doth not that practice allow tradition besides Scripture?

(i) I answer first, We refuse no traditions which are agreeable to the Scripture and analogy of faith; but such as are agreeable to one of these, we receive them, though not as Scripture.

(ii) Secondly, if the apostles in the New Testament do add anything in the story which is not in the Old (as St Paul does the names of the sorcerers in Egypt, Jannes and Jambres (2 Tim. 3:8)), that circumstance by them so added is to be holden as Scripture and no

tradition, because they having the same Spirit of God which the writers of the Old Testament had, have inserted it into the body of Scripture; even as the three sentences of the heathen poets alleged by St Paul (Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 15:33; Tit. 1:12) have now a divine truth in them, which they had not before.

But yet will some say, The apostles had these things from the Old Testament by tradition; seeing they were not written. I answer, we may safely grant it, and yet our cause loseth nothing, though it may be they had them by inspiration, and not by tradition, that being as likely, or much more than the other.

(iii) Thirdly, but for this particular, I answer, that the apostle had the words, or at least the matter, out of the story of Genesis. For thus go the words: God said to Abraham, Go out of thy country c., into the land that I will shew thee. He named none to him, but told him He would shew him one. So then, Abraham went out at God's appointment; and God knew, but he knew not whither he went; he knew well the land he left, but he knew not the land he should have.

But it may be again objected that this is not true; for it appears (Gen. 12:5) that Abraham with Sarah his wife, and all their substance, departed to go into the land of Canaan, and to the land of Canaan they came; therefore he knew whither he went; namely to that land.

I answer, It is true he went out with purpose and assurance, to inherit a land promised him by God, but not named to him. And whereas it is there said, He went out to go into the land of Canaan, that is spoken in respect of the performance when he was come thither, not of the first promise made him at his departure; or of the time when Moses wrote it, nor of the time when God spake it to Abraham. And that he knew not what land God did mean until he came thither, is plain (Gen. 15:6,7) where it is said that, when

Abraham had passed through all the country, and was come into Canaan, then God appeared to him and said, This land will I give unto thy seed. But till then God never named it unto him; and therefore we read before that he believed and obeyed upon the general promise; but now when God did particularly specify and shew what land, he then shewed his thankfulness to God, and did there build an altar unto the God that had appeared unto him.

Thus it is clear that Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went. Which being so, it appears that Abraham did that which the world would call plain foolishness. To leave known friends for unknown, certain living for uncertain, is a simple course in man's reason; at least (the world will say) he might first have demanded of God what land that was which he should have, before he left that which he had; but Abraham makes no such questions, moves no such doubts; but believeth and obeyeth, and goeth out of his certain dwelling (at God's calling), though he knew not where to lodge at night.

Uses:

This practice of faithful Abraham hath profitable use:

(i) First, here we learn, that though God's commandments seem foolish, and unreasonable, yet we must obey them. Christ saith, If a man will ever come in the ckingdom of heaven, he must be born again (John 3:3). St Paul saith, If any man among you seem to be wise, let him be a fool that he may be wise (1 Cor. 3:18). Christ saith, If any man will be my disciple, he must deny himself and follow me (Luke 9:23).

But how can these commandments be believed or done? How can reason believe them? How can nature do them? So disputed the

woman of Samaria with Christ (John 4:11), when Christ told her He would give her of the water of life, she replied, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; whence then hast thou that water of life? Thus we object and reason against God with carnal objections, and weigh God's commandments in the balance of reason; thus God and His commandments are much abused by us. And this is the cause we hear and read God's word, and profit not by it, because we ponder it in our reason, and allow nor follow it no further than it agreeth with our natural affections. As a man that will needs stand under a penthouse hath no water falling on him, though it should rain never so precious water from heaven; so when the water of life, out of the word of God, should drop upon our souls, to comfort our consciences, and to wash away our sins; we have our devices out of wit, and distinctions out of reason, as penthouses to keep it from us, that it slides away, and never hath any work in us. But contrariwise, we must remember Abraham the father of our faith; and when we hear God's word, we must with him captivate our reason, and subdue our affections to it; measure them by God's word, and not it by them; and what we cannot yield to in the obedience of reason, we must obey with the obedience of faith; and so shall God's word have a gracious and powerful work in us.

(ii) Secondly, here we must learn that though we see no profit come by obeying God's commandments, yet we must obey them. For what profit could Abraham see in leaving a certain living for an uncertain? Yet he obeyed and went, upon the bare word of God, building upon it, that God being his guide, he could not go astray. So must we follow God sincerely, and do His commandments, though no profit seem to come thereby. But some will say, Shall godly men be led like blindfold fools? Shall they refuse all means of help, by wit and policy? This is the way to make them ridiculous, and asses for the wicked world to ride upon.

I answer, Let godly men use all their wit, and look with all their eyes, in their actions with men of this world. But in the obedience of God's commandments, let them do as Abraham did: follow God's calling, though it seem to be to no end.

In obedience to God we must do as blind men do, who follow their guides, though it be through woods and rocks, hills or dales, or dangerous places; regarding nothing, fearing nothing; only following and trusting to their guides, who have eyes for them, though they have none for themselves. So must we follow God's calling, and yield absolute obedience to His commandments, fearing nothing but trusting to the faithfulness of his power, and assuredly believing that He being our blessed guide, we shall not be misled; thus to do is true faith.

But alas, how contrary is the practice of the world. Men deal with God, as we do with loose chapmen [pedlars], whom we will not trust without a good pawn [pledge/security]. So we will not obey God's commandments longer than His religion serves our turn; nor will we trust and follow God without the pawns and profits of pleasure. Nay, we do worse; most men esteem of God no better, nor use Him any better than they do thieves in their houses. If a man come into our house that is given to stealing, we trust him as long as he is in our sight; but if he be out of our sight, we think ever he is stealing. So if men see the means of God's providence, they will take His Word, and trust it; but else God must excuse them, they may not trust Him further than they see Him. And if the commandments of God sound to their content, and tend to their profit, they will obey them; but if not, they will cast them behind their back; at least they will make a pause at the matter, and take their own time. And if God's ways seem pleasant and profitable, they will walk in them; or else they will leave them, and walk in their own.

And hence is it that men in distresses run to wizards and wise men; others deal fraudulently and deceitfully; others work on the Sabbath day; and thus by indirect and unlawful dealing, they labour to enrich themselves, and to bring their purposes to pass. And why all this? But because God's commandments do not sound to their purpose, nor tend to their profit, and therefore they will not obey them.

If these men had been in Abraham's case, they would never had gone out, not knowing whither to go; but they would have argued the matter with God, and have thought it good wisdom to pause well, before they leave a certainty for an uncertainty. But contrariwise, Abraham thought it foolishness to reason with God, and therefore performed absolute obedience; and for this cause, he and his faith are renowned to this day, namely 3,000 years after him, and shall be to the world's end.

This was the obedience of faith; and this to do, is to be true subjects of God's kingdom. If the king calls a man from his own living, to come to himself and to the court; who will not leave what he hath of his own, and trust his word? So who will not leave his own wisdom, and rely on the promise and the Word of God; and obey His commandments, though there seem at the first no profit can come thereby. Thus shall we be sure, both to have sufficient for this world, and shall also be true children of faithful Abraham.

Hitherto of the first example of Abraham's faith.

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Hebrews 11:9-10.

“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” Hebrews 11:9.

Here is the second example of Abraham’s faith, and the fifth in order, and is concerning Abraham’s abiding, or dwelling in that land whereinto God had called him; and this he also did by faith. As he went out of his own country and came into Canaan, by the power and leading of his faith; so, by the same faith, he abode and dwelt in the same land.

The parts are two:

I. The action of Abraham’s faith, in the 9th verse.

II. The reason of that his so doing, in the 10th.

I. The action in the 9th verse is spoken of two ways:

1. It is laid down to be his abiding in the land of promise.

2. It is amplified by two circumstances:

(1). The manner how he dwelt there, in two points:

(i) As a stranger, or in a strange country.

(ii) As one that dwelt in tents, and not in houses.

(2). The persons with whom: with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

1. The first point in order, is his dwelling in the land of Canaan (called here the land of promise).

By faith he abode in the land of promise.

Canaan is now called the land of promise, because it was promised in the verse before, as we then heard; so that the meaning is that he abode in that land which was promised him, when he came out of his own country. Which country Abraham knew not by name, when he left his own, nor till he came thither; but then God told him, This is the land I will give thee, and thy seed (Gen. 12:7). In this land thus promised, Abraham dwelt and remained the rest of his life, which was an hundred years.

In this action of Abraham, there are three particular points:

(1). He dwelt in Canaan.

(2). That Canaan was the land of promise.

(3). He dwelt there by faith.

(1). For the first: Concerning Abraham's dwelling in Canaan, divers questions may be moved:

(i) First, how is it true that he abode or dwelt there? Seeing it is apparent in the story he dwelt in Egypt (Gen. 12:10) and in Gerar (Gen. 20:1).

I answer, the meaning is not that he stayed there every day of his life; but that he lived and died there, and made it the place of his residence and ordinary habitation, whereunto he always resorted again, if any occasion drew him abroad.

And further, he went not into Egypt but upon such special cause as could not otherwise be helped, as upon a famine or such like (Gen. 12:10), Then there came a famine in the land; therefore Abraham went down into Egypt to sojourn there. Where it appears, first, that the cause was extraordinary; secondly, that he went not to make any dwelling but to sojourn there for a time, and then to repair home again.

Where we learn that as a man is not to depart out of that land where God hath appointed him to dwell, but upon good and sufficient causes; so when those causes cease, which drew him out, he is not to stay longer from home; but to repair again to the place of his ordinary dwelling. God would have a man dwell at home; and it is levity, and a token of an unconstant mind, and a running head, for a man to desire to be always abroad.

Birds fly abroad, but so as they may come to their nests at night; so men should endeavour, as much as may be, to take few occasions of being from their dwellings; and when they needs must, to let it be for as short a time as may be. For as it is a sign of a light woman (Prov. 7:11) Her feet cannot abide in her house; so is it of an unstayed man upon every occasion to be carried from home.

We must therefore follow holy Abraham, who is here commended for abiding or dwelling in the country which God had given him.

(ii) Again, this practice of Abraham's faith condemns the wandering beggars to be an unfaithful and ungracious generation. Our land (by

the abuse of our peace and plenty) is full of such. Ask them where they dwell, their answer is that they have small dwelling; but look into the matter and they have the largest dwelling of all, for they dwell everywhere, and all abroad; they count it bondage to be tied to one town, or dwell in one parish, and think it freedom and liberty to dwell everywhere. These are caterpillars of a commonwealth, and the greatest robbers of the poor that are. Common thieves steal from rich men, but these steal from the poor; they get that from men which the true poor should have. No good comes to church or commonwealth by these men, but much hurt to both. For, a finger cut off from his place is of no use; so a man living out of his calling is of no use in the body politick.

Happy will it be with our church and state when we have such laws, and such execution of them, as that this disorder may be reformed, and every man confined to his own dwelling, and none suffered to live in our kingdom who is not of some parish; for let us be assured, so many wandering beggars, so many blemishes in our government.

(iii) Thirdly, Abraham dwelling in this land (being a fruit of his faith) teacheth us that it is no good token, but an ill sign for a man to be uncertain in his dwelling. It is the fashion of many men, if they travel, they never lodge at one place twice; and for their dwelling, it is not certain; but now in the north, now in the south; now in this parish, now in that; now in this jurisdiction, now in another; sometime in the city, sometime in the country. Who be these, but either such as be in debt, and purpose to deal ill with their creditors; or that are malefactors, and hereby labour to avoid the censure of authority; or else they be papists, which by this means labour to lurk unseen, and to escape the law; as many of them do, either by skipping out of one parish, diocese, country or province into another, and so avoiding the authority of all; or else, by lurking in great cities,

and so lying as sojourners and not as parishioners, unseen and unmarked in so great multitudes. Let our authority take the more careful notice of such men, the more craftily they labour to creep from under it; and let such men know, they discover themselves the more by this practice, to be unfaithful either to God, or men, or both; seeing that God here commends Abraham for dwelling or staying in that place which God had appointed him. And so much for this question.

(iv) Again, it may here be demanded, how Abraham might lawfully dwell in Canaan, seeing it was then idolatrous. It may seem that therefore it is not unlawful for men to dwell in popish or idolatrous countries.

I answer, Abraham did not so upon any private motion, nor for any worldly cause, but upon special warrant and calling from God; otherwise his so doing had not been justifiable; therefore that practice of his cannot be a warrant for any to do the like, without the like cause and calling.

But how could Abraham be preserved from the contagion of idolaters living amongst them?

I answer, first, God that called him thither, did there preserve him. Again, Abraham lived in the country, but conversed not with the people at all, except in some necessary and civil affairs; and by this means escaped the danger of infection.

Where we may learn, that if any man would live in such places, without hurt to their conscience, let them first be sure that they have a calling and warrant from God to live in those countries. Secondly, let them converse with idolaters warily and sparingly, and so shall they preserve themselves from the occasions of evil, as Abraham did,

who abode in an idolatrous country; and so, though not without danger, yet without hurt to his religion. Thus we see Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan.

(2). Now, secondly, this land is called the land of promise; that is, the land formerly promised him by God, when He called him out of his own country. And it is likely that the apostle doth not here first of all call it so, but that it was known generally among the patriarchs by that name; and that Abraham himself did first of all so call it; who when he looked upon it, and considered the fruitfulness and excellence of it, did evermore remember and call to mind, this land is promised to me, this is mine by promise. And herein he rested and satisfied himself, though he had not the possession of it.

Here we may see the excellence of true faith, which depends upon the promises of God, though they be unperformed. A land of promise contents Abraham, he leaves the possession to his posterity. It is hard to find such faith in the world; it is land in possession which we look for; a land of promise cannot content us; but let us labour to practice faith, and to take comfort in the promises of God, and leave the performance to God's appointed time.

(3). Thirdly, he dwelt in this land by faith. And no marvel, for had it not been by faith, he would never had dwelt there, where he had not so much as a room for his tent to stand in, but he must borrow it; nor to bury his dead, but he must buy it. This was against reason, yet by faith he dwelt there, as before by faith he left his own, which was also against reason. Where still the power of faith is magnified to be such, as it will carry a man over all impediments of obedience, and will give him victory not against one, but against all objections; and power to perform not one, but many things contrary to carnal wisdom.

We must here learn to examine whether we have a true and sound faith or no. If we have, then we must not do some one or few actions in faith, or die in faith, but we must live by faith the whole course of our lives. We must walk by faith and not by sight, saith the apostle (2 Cor. 5:7). So saith he of himself (Gal. 2:20), I live by faith in the Son of God; he saith not that he hopes to die in that faith, but that he lives by it. And in the former place, he saith not that we must set a step or two, but that we must walk by faith, which argueth a continued action; and therefore it is that St Peter saith, God's children are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (1 Pet. 1:5). In which words, two things are spoken of faith: the first is affirmed, namely, that faith preserveth a man to salvation through all hindrances, either of inward temptations or outward crosses, which the devil or the world can lay in his way. This preservation is one of the greatest works in the world, and therefore it is worthily ascribed to God; the power of God preserveth us, but through faith. The second is implied; that therefore we must labour to keep that faith evermore with us, which must keep us, and to cherish and preserve that that must preserve us to salvation. David was an excellent practitioner hereof; no man was more tried and tossed than he, yet he ever drew near unto God (Psa. 73:28). Indeed sometime he said, all men are liars (Psa. 116:11), but that was in his fear; and again, I am cast out of thy sight (Psa. 31:22), but that was in his haste; that is, when the force of some passion, or the violence of some temptations did carry him headlong; but otherwise he ever lived the life of faith.

So must we not think to live in sensuality and die in faith; but to live by faith in all our actions, from one day to another, meditating daily on God's promises, and believing them, and relying on them, and applying the generals to our own selves, and practicing faith by making conscience of sin, and inuring ourselves to patience and longsuffering. Thus doing, we shall be children of faithful Abraham,

who first by faith left his own country, and then by faith also dwelt still in the land of Canaan. And thus much for the action of his faith, he abode in the land of promise.

2. Now followeth the circumstances of the action, which are two:

(1). The manner how.

(2). The persons with whom.

(1). The manner is laid down in two points:

(i) As a stranger.

(ii) As one that dwelt in tents.

(i) The first point, for the manner, is laid down in these words:

As in a strange country.

The meaning is, he esteemed it a strange country to him, and accounted himself a stranger in it. Against which it may be objected that he was familiarly acquainted with Mamre, Aner and Eshcol, three great and mighty men of that country; that he and they were confederates together (Gen. 14:13); therefore it seems he lived not like a stranger in the country.

Some answer that these three were not Canaanites, but near akin to Abraham and had other names; but the text is plain in that place, that Mamre was an Amorite, and the other two were his brethren. Therefore the answer is that in all likelihood they three were proselytes, and that by Abraham's godly persuasion they had renounced idolatry, and were come to the knowledge of the true God; and that they joined with Abraham in the worship of the true God,

and so were his converts; whereupon Abraham (as he might lawfully) conversed with them as his familiar friends. And hereof there are two inducements:

(a) First, it is said (Gen. 14:13) that they were confederates with Abraham, and it appeared so by their deeds; for they joined their powers, and assisted him in the war against the kings (Gen. 14:24).

(b) Secondly, it is said (Gen. 14:13) that Abraham dwelt in the land of Mamre; he was his tenant or farmer. Now, it is more than likely that Abraham would not have been so far beholden to them, but that they were true Christians, and of his own religion.

Therefore this hinders not, but he might be a stranger notwithstanding, unto the body of the people; and that it is true that Abraham saith of himself to some of them (Gen 23:4), I am a stranger and a sojourner amongst you.

But it may then be demanded, Why did Abraham live amongst them as a stranger, and in that land as a sojourner?

I answer, the reasons were divers:

(a) First, he had title given to that land, but no possession; he therefore contented himself with that that God gave him, and challenged not any possession all the days of his life, but bought or borrowed of Mamre the place where he lived and dwelt (Gen. 14:13), and of the Hittites a place of burial (Gen. 23:3ff.).

This may teach all men not to be too hasty in seeking for that, that it may be is their right; let not men prescribe their own times, nor be their own carvers, but leave their affairs to God's disposing, and enter no further than they see God going before them; Abraham

must be a stranger in his own land; and thou sometimes must be content for a time to be a stranger to that which is thine own.

(b) Secondly, they were all of them for the most part heathen idolaters, amongst whom Abraham would not converse, but as sparingly as might be. Now if Abraham would be a stranger in his own country, rather than live familiarly with idolaters; if sheweth how little faith, and less conscience they have, who can be content to live in the midst of idolaters, where they have nothing to do, and can converse with them in all familiarity, without any scruple of conscience. Abraham made himself a stranger at home to avoid idolatry; but they will make themselves at home in a strange country, to entangle themselves in idolatry; these men will hardly prove the children of Abraham.

These reasons Abraham himself had in this his so doing.

(c) There is a third, a more spiritual, or mystical reason; and that reason God had in making Abraham live in Canaan as a stranger; namely to teach all Christian men their duty to the world's end.

Abraham is the father of the faithful (Rom. 4:11). And this is our honour, to be the children of Abraham, we must therefore follow our father in his faith, and in the practice of it; we must live in this world as pilgrims and strangers, even in the midst of all our peace and prosperity, of all our liberties, riches, lands and possessions; yea, of all our worldly friends and acquaintances. If it seem strange how this can be, I answer, the practice of it consists in six actions:

(a) First we must not bathe ourselves in the pleasures of this world. Pilgrims take but little delight in their journeys, because they think themselves not at home. This is St Peter's argument: Dearly beloved, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which fight

against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11). For too much delight in fleshly pleasures smothers the grace of God in us, and lets loose all sins, and gives life unto all corruptions.

(b) Secondly, we must use this world as though we used it not; that is, even the necessary comforts and delights thereof; they be the very words of the apostle (1 Cor. 7:31). For so the pilgrim, when he passeth through a strange country, hath not his mind troubled with looking or thinking on the goods and commodities of that country where he is; but using as much thereof as is necessary for him, all his thoughts are on his own country. So should we, when we are in our best estates, in our greatest jollity, in the midst of our wealth and abundance of pleasures, cast our minds from them, and have our thoughts even then conversing in heaven, where is the place of our abode. This is likewise the apostle's exhortation (Phil. 3:20). Worldly men make their belly their god (Phil 3:19), that is, drown themselves in carnal pleasures, so far, as they forget any other God, any other heaven. But we must not do so; our conversation must be in heaven, from whence we look for our Saviour Jesus Christ.

(c) Thirdly, we must have a serious care and endeavour to please God; for all the earth is His, and we are but sojourners in His sight; therefore as the pilgrim is careful to please the lord of the country, by whose leave he travels through it; so must we be to please the Lord; seeing as God saith (Lev. 25:23), The land is mine, and ye are but strangers and sojourners with me.

(d) And hereunto add a fourth, which is near akin unto it: We must cast all our care on God, seeing that He is the Lord of the earth, and we are but pilgrims and sojourners. David saith (Psa. 24:1), The earth is the Lord's and all that therein is. The same David confesseth (Psa. 39:12), he is a stranger before God and a sojourner, as all his

father's were; and thereupon desireth God to hear his prayer, hearken to his cry, and not to keep silence at his tears; as though he had said, inasmuch as I sojourn with thee, thou art to hear my complaint. For as a sojourner cares nor looks for nothing, but depends on them for all things with whom he sojourns, so must we cast all our care on God; for he careth for us (1 Pet. 5:7). He is our landlord, we are His farmers and tenants, we hold the earth from Him, by no lease of years, but at His will, and it is lent us; let us therefore but have care to please this our landlord, and care for nothing.

(e) Fifthly, we must give continual thanks and praise to God for His good blessings we receive in this world; for all are His, and we are but strangers. Thus did all God's saints in old time; Jacob was not worthy of the least of God's mercies (Gen. 32:10). But especially there is one memorable example of David, and the church in his days (1 Chr. 29:12-16). When he had prepared abundantly for the building of the temple, he prostrated himself before God, and in his own name and the people's, said thus: Riches and honour come of thee, therefore our God we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I and what is my people, that we should offer unto thee? For all is thine, and of thine own have we given thee; for we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Thankfulness becomes all men, especially strangers. Therefore as pilgrims do thankfully accept the favours shewed them in a strange country; so must we, all the blessings God gives us in this world, where we are but strangers.

(f) Sixthly, and lastly, we must hasten to the kingdom, as a pilgrim doth to his journey's end, or to his own country; and till he can, is always thinking of it, and sighing after it; so must we (who are not dwellers but sojourners in these houses of clay) long after heaven,

and as St Paul saith, he did covet to remove from hence, and to dwell with the Lord (Phil. 1:23). Strangers are not to take such pleasure in foreign countries, as to forget their own. So Christians must nor be so in love with this world, as to forget or neglect the world to come. If they do, they are unworthy of it, and shew themselves no strangers, as Abraham here was; but men of this world, who have their portion in this life (Psa. 17:14).

In performing these six actions, men shew themselves strangers in this world. And thus must we do, even in the midst of all worldly prosperity, if we look ever to enjoy the glory of a better. And thus doing, we shall be children of faithful Abraham, who dwelt in the land of Canaan, as in a strange country.

(ii) As one that dwelt in tents.

The second point for the manner, how Abraham dwelt in Canaan, is that he built himself no houses, nor made orchards or gardens, but dwelt in tents or tabernacles; which were such houses as now are used in war, and are yet called by the same name, tents, or pavilions; whose matter is not wood, nor stone, but cloth, stuff or skins; and are easily reared and soon taken down; and when a man departeth, he may carry his house with him. That Abraham did thus, appears in the stories written of him. He came to Bethel, and there pitched his tent (Gen. 12:8), and (Gen. 13:8), he removed his tent; and (Gen. 18:1), God appeared to him, as he sat at his tent door, and (v.9), being asked where Sarah was, he answered, she is within the tent; and these tents are called his place (Gen. 18:33), and his house (Gen. 24:2). Out of all which places it is plain that he dwelt in tents, and that not only at his first coming, when he had not time to build him an house, but even all the days of his life, after his coming in to the land of Canaan.

But why did Abraham dwell in tents and not in houses? Was it because then there were no houses? Not so, for there were cities built even before the flood (Gen. 4:17). Cain built a city; no marvel therefore there were many after, as Sodom and all her sisters. And though it appears not that they digged into the earth for natural stone, yet they had bricks, which they made themselves (Gen. 11:3), and surely the world, which built the huge tower of Babel, would not stick to build themselves houses. Nor can it be said that those cities, Sodom, Gomorrah and the rest, were nothing but a multitude of tents together; for we read (Gen. 19:3,4), that Lot dwelling in Sodom, received two angels into his house and that the Sodomites came and environed his house round about to take them, thinking they had been men; and when Lot refused to deliver them, that they pressed sore upon the house to have broken up the door; but all this might have been spared if it had been nothing but a tent, which a child may cut in pieces with a knife. It is manifest then, that there were houses in those days. Why then did Abraham build none? Was it because he was poor and could not? No so, for contrariwise (Gen. 12:5), He carried with him from his own country, all the substance he possessed. And what that was is particularised (Gen. 13:2), He was rich in cattle, silver and gold. His riches were both great and of the best. So then, he could, but would not. But why would he not? Was it upon a proud humour, or in a conceited singularity, because he would not be like other men, but have a singular way of his own? No; Abraham was none of those, who allow nothing but that is done of themselves; and who think nothing good, if it be ordinary; for he was an holy man, and famous for his faith. So then none of these were the reasons of this his so doing.

The reasons then why Abraham, and other holy patriarchs, used to dwell in tents, and not to build them houses, were of two sorts, civil and holy.

(a) The civil, or politick respect that they had was this: They holding themselves God's servants, did depend on His Word; and therefore did submit themselves to go up and down the world, whithersoever God did call them. Being then to remove every day (they knew not when nor whither) it was therefore both the fittest, and cheapest, to dwell in tents, which were soon pitched up, and soon taken down. Neither need it seem strange that they could live for cold in those poor thin tents all the year long; for the country and climate there was always temperate enough for cold; and rather inclining to too much heat.

(b) The holy or religious respect was this: They held themselves but strangers upon earth, and therefore would not build themselves cities or houses; as looking or caring to live upon earth; but dwelled in tents, as seeming desirous to remove from the earth to heaven; the sooner the better. And this did the fathers of the Old Testament; not that they thought it unlawful to build cities or dwell in houses; but that they might testify to their religion, and expectation of another world, in the midst of that profane age wherein they lived; wherein there were almost none that either regarded, or remembered, or acknowledged a world to come.

And this was not the particular or singular deed of Abraham alone. All holy men in those days lived in tents (Gen. 9:21). It is clear that Noah dwelt in tents, though then he was king of all the world. And so did Lot also, as long as he lived with Abraham (Gen. 13:5), Lot had sheep and cattle and tents. And thus they did, because (as the apostle saith) they had here no enduring city, but they sought for one to come (Heb. 13:14). And they thought they ever heard that voice sounding in their ears (Micah 2:10), Arise and depart, for this is not your rest.

Contrariwise, the wicked of the world, because they set their rests in this world, and cared for no other; they began presently to build them houses, nay cities (as Cain did even in the beginning) (Gen. 4:17). And the Sodomites had a city even walled (as is likely), for Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom, when the two angels came to him (Gen. 19:1,2). And the Canaanites had cities walled exceeding high (Num. 13:28). But we find not that ever God's children built them cities, until they came to have a settled church of their own. But contrariwise, it is worth observing that God promiseth His people that they shall come and dwell in cities which they built not (Josh. 24:13), namely, which were built by worldly men by their hand. And thus we see the reasons why Abraham dwelt in tents. Now let us see the use of it.

(a) First, here we learn frugality, out of the civil use of their tents; that is to use the blessings and comforts of this life as soberly, and sparingly as may be; as to bestow as little cost as may be of ourselves in such things as perish in the using; namely, meat, drink, apparel and houses. For what is spent hereon, is spent only on ourselves; and being spent is gone; therefore the less, the better; always provided there be a discreet care had of our health, and of the credit of the places we hold; and of the enabling to the duties of our calling. Which being sufficiently provided for, it is a Christian frugality to spare what further may be spared; and he hath the less to answer for, who spendeth the least in superfluities.

(b) Again, here we are taught contentment in the state which God hath appointed us, and not to strive too fast to climb to wealth. These holy men can be content to dwell in tents and tabernacles, though they might have compassed much more; for they were great and mighty men. Abraham had 318 men able to bear a sword in his house daily; and with them and a little more help, he overthrew divers

kings and rescued Lot (Gen. 14:14). He that durst encounter, and did overcome such an host; how many inhabitants of the country could he have beat out of their houses? And how many tenants could he have put out of their livings? And how much of that country could he have enclosed to himself? Surely, even as much and as many as he had pleased. Yet doth he no such thing; but contrariwise, considering himself to be but a tenant under God, he is content to let every man sit quietly by him, and himself to dwell in tents, rather than to encroach one foot further than God bade him, though he had been able.

This checketh the pride, or covetousness, or ambition, or all, of such as join house to house, land to land, lordship unto lordship, town to town; and care not how many men's houses they pull down to build one of their own; nor how many men want land and living, so they can have their parks, and pastures, gardens, and orchards, and all other delights they can devise. These are so far from Abraham's mind, who desired only so much land as his tent might stand on, and might feed his cattle; as they can enclose and make several to themselves, that which in common should be the living of many souls. But what can befall such men? But that Isaiah prophesieth unto them (Isa. 5:8), Woe be unto them that join house to house, and land to land, till there be no place left for the poor to dwell in.

(c) Thirdly, in that Abraham lived thus, as ready ever to depart into another country, when God would call him; he sheweth that true faith doth never limit God's hand, either in the greatness or length of trials, but submitteth itself wholly to His will, being resolved and content to suffer all trials, how great soever they are, and how many soever God pleaseth to lay upon a man. Reason would have said, I have left one country at God's word; if I must leave another, then I shall never know an end, nor have anything certain to trust to. But

faith saith, As I have left one country at God's calling, so upon His word I will leave twenty more. For God hath as good reason to bid me the second time, as the first; and His love cannot fail me; He may still try me, but can never leave me. Thus spake Abraham's faith. And not he alone, for Job, though he cry out of the violence of his temptation, The arrows of the Almighty are in me, and the venom thereof doth drink up my spirit, and the terrors of God do fight against me (Job 6:4); yet when faith comes to play its part, he then protesteth that though God kill him, yet he will trust in him, and He shall be his salvation (Job 13:15). See Abraham's faith will lead him from country to country; and Job's will carry him through life and death. And noble David is not behind for his part; for he will lose his kingdom, if God will have it so (2 Sam. 15:26), If (saith David) God shall have no delight in thee; lo, here I am, let Him do to me (not what I in my reason could wish, but) what seemeth good in His eyes. Behold now in these holy men, the practice and obedience of true faith. It prescribes not God the measure how long, or how far He shall afflict us; but makes a man resign up himself wholly, his causes, his livings, his country, his kingdom, his life and all, to be at God's disposing. He that can do thus may have joy in himself, as being assuredly one of the children of faithful Abraham.

(d) Fourthly, in that Abraham in a strange country will not build him an house, but dwell in tents, which daily are removable; here may such men learn as are travellers, or merchants, or sojourners in foreign countries, not to thrust themselves too hastily into society and familiarity with the people of those countries where they sojourn. Abraham will not build him an house in a strange country, but will dwell in tents, that so he may the easier remove; even so, let no man fix and fasten himself too hastily in a strange country, but live so, as he may easily remove, when he seeth good cause.

(e) Fifthly, Abraham who in his own country (it is likely) had his house, in a strange country will have none, but will dwell in tents. His practice must teach us, even so, not to build us houses in this world, where we are strangers, but to set our tent here, and to look for our house in heaven. Literally we are not bound to do as Abraham did, but mystically we must do it; the state of our bodies here, is but a tent or tabernacle; the state of our souls in heaven, is a strong house. We must therefore say with the apostle (2 Cor. 5:1,2), We are willing that this earthly tabernacle were destroyed, and desire to be clothed with our house, which is from heaven. Carnal and worldly men build their house in this world; that is, have all their care for their body; but if we follow our father Abraham, and esteem our life, and bodies, but as tabernacles presently to be removed, and build our houses in heaven, then walk we here in the steps of his faith, and after this life shall attain his reward.

For the ending and knitting up of this point, it may be asked, How can this be any such commendation to him, seeing that wicked men have used to dwell in tents?

I answer, never any of them, but in two cases; first, in time of war, where armies lying abroad in the fields, or in the siege of cities, must needs lie in tents; and so do all men, Christian or heathen to this day; or secondly, such as kept sheep did for their cattles' sake lie abroad in tents; as it is recorded of Jabel, one of Cain's posterity (Gen. 4:20), that he was the father of all them that dwell in tents, and such as have cattle. In which words, observe how, their dwelling in tents and having cattle are put together; and so the Arabians, great keepers of cattle, do in Arabia (being a hot country) to this day. So that it is clear, the wicked dwelt in tents, either for necessities sake in the war, or else for profit's sake with their cattle; but that for no such cause, but for their own sakes; and because they esteemed themselves

strangers in the world, it was never found that any ungodly man dwelt in tents all his life; but that it was always a practice of holy and faithful men, until they came to have a settled church and state of their own.

And thus much for the manner how Abraham dwelt in Canaan: 1. As a stranger 2. Dwelling in tents.

(2). Now follow the persons with whom.

With Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

The second circumstance is the persons with whom; they were Isaac and Jacob; his son and his grandchild. But it may first of all be asked, to what clause is this referred, whether to Abraham's dwelling in Canaan, or to his being there a stranger, or to his dwelling there in tents? The answer is, to them all three; He dwelt there with them, he was a stranger with them, he dwelt in tents with them, and they with him. Now the meaning is not, that they dwelt together with Abraham in the same tents, at the same time (for Isaac was not born till Abraham was an hundred years old, and Jacob was but young when Abraham died); but that the same promise made to Abraham, God renewed after to them, first to Isaac, and then to Jacob; which they also believed as Abraham did, and by the power of that faith were content to dwell in tents, as strangers, as he had done before them.

But why doth he name none but Isaac and Jacob? Did no other dwell in tents, and think themselves strangers, but they? Yes, many others; but these two are named above any other, both for that they were next to Abraham in time, and in blood, and in faith also; for their faith was so excellent, as God is called the God of these three men, more specially than any other in the world; but in and under

these two, are all others understood, who, embracing the same promise, did therefore as strangers dwell in tents.

From hence we learn divers excellent instructions:

(i) First, see here a notable work of faith; I mean of true faith in the promises of eternal life; namely, that it conformeth the believers one to another, both in the inward disposition of heart, and outward conversation of life. God hath made this promise, that He so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have life everlasting (John 3:16). Now as this promise is one, so is the faith that apprehends it; and this faith being one, conformeth all that have it, and makes them like one to another in the obedience of God's commandments. This is that that the Holy Ghost saith (Acts 4:32), The believers were all of one heart, and one soul; and that not one of them, but the whole multitude of them that believed. And Isaiah prophesieth that in the kingdom of Christ shall be such uniformity and peace, as that though men in their natures be as contrary one to another as sheep and wolves, lions and kids, young children and serpents; yet by grace and faith in Christ, they are changed, and all conformed one to another so as they shall live and consent together in the unity of one obedience (Isa. 11:6,7).

The Book of Psalms was penned by David, Asaph, Moses and others, and in several ages and states of the church, and were appointed to be sung then, for the present state of the church in those days. It may therefore be demanded: Why then do we sing them now in our churches? The answer is: the church in all ages consists of a number of believers, and the faith is always one, and makes all that apprehend God's promises to be alike to one another in grace, in meditations, in dispositions, in affections, in desires, in spiritual

wants, in the feeling and use of afflictions, in course and conversation of life, and in performance of duties to God and man; and therefore the same psalms, prayers and meditations, are now as fit for the church in these days, and are said and sung with the same use and profit, as in the church in those days when they were first made.

This doctrine hath profitable use:

(a) First, if this be so, here is confuted the opinion and practice of many; who when they are taught that they ought to do this or this, after the examples of holy men in times past, they answer: They were great and glorious men, they may not think to be like them; and their examples are too high; they may admire them, but not follow them. For example, when they are exhorted to walk with God, as Enoch did (Gen. 5:24), to refuse the world for Christ, as Moses did (Exod. 2:10); to spare our enemies being in our power, as David did (1 Sam. 24:5-7); in magistracy to be able to say, Whose ox or ass have I taken, or whom have I done wrong to? as Samuel said (1 Sam. 12:3); in the ministry to follow the zeal, the patience, the diligence of the holy ministers of God in old time; then they answer, that they dare not look at them, and that they may not think to be like them. But let these men know that if they have the same faith, they have the same conscience; and that as Isaac and Jacob, though they had not the same measure of faith that Abraham had, yet having the same faith, were therefore willing to dwell in tents, as he had done. So, if we have the same faith that our fathers in times past had; then howsoever we cannot match them in holiness, and in virtues, yet we must seriously labour to be like unto them, and must also practice the same virtues, which they did; for if we be heirs with them of the same promise, then must we be practisers with them in the same obedience.

(b) Secondly, this checketh a great and common profaneness, which now reigneth amongst us. We all profess religion; yet come to the practice of religion, the hearing of the Word, receiving the holy sacrament, or prayer, or abstaining from foul and common sins; let a man be in any of these more forward than others, then some are so profane as they stick not to deride and reproach them. But is this to be heirs of one and the same promise? Let such men therefore know that we in this age of the church, are bound to conform ourselves to the holy lives of the fathers of the old church, or else we have not the same faith that they had. Therefore our duty is to strive, and by all means we can, to endeavour who should come nearest to their faith, to their zeal, and to their obedience. And if any do it more than we do, we should rather honour than reproach him.

(ii) In the next place, observe here the power of a great man's example, how forcible it is; especially to them of the same kindred. Abraham a grand patriarch, a man of honour, he is contented to dwell in tents, like a stranger in that land which was promised him to be his own. Isaac his son followeth him, and doth so also. Jacob his grandchild comes after, and he walketh in both their steps. Let this teach all superiors (be they parents, magistrates, or ministers) to look to their ways; for the higher they be, the more are they followed either in good or in evil. We see in courts what princes do, they are imitated; and any fashion they take up or put in practice (be it never so strange) is followed of all men. And here we see, if Abraham will dwell in no house but in tents, Isaac and Jacob will do so after him.

(iii) Thirdly, observe how these three holy men are called heirs of the promise; and they are so called in regard of God. Who as He made the promise to Abraham, so He renewed it to them both severally; and withal gave them grace to apprehend it, and to shew the obedience of their faith, as Abraham did.

But it is very notable that they are not called heirs of the land, but of the promise; for they enjoyed not the land, but the promise; and their seed did afterwards enjoy the land itself. Wherein appears the excellency of their faith; for they who thus blessedly believed, and thus patiently and constantly obeyed God in all duties of holy obedience, having but bare promises, how excellent and eminent would their faith and obedience have been had they been partakers of the blessings themselves. And here also must we learn our duties. For in greater matters than the land of Canaan, we enjoy the things, whereas they but had the promises; as namely, the incarnation of the Messiah, and the calling of the Gentiles; these two great and grand mercies were looked for by them, but enjoyed by us; they had the promises, but we the performance. Therefore if our obedience, and patience, and other virtues be behind theirs, our condemnation must needs be so much the deeper.

Much more is to be said of Isaac and Jacob's faith; but they have several examples for themselves.

It followeth,

II. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Hebrews 11:10.

Thus we see the fact of Abraham's faith; now followeth the reason that moved him to live in the land of Canaan, as a stranger, and in tents. And the reason is because he looked for a city, whose builder and maker is God, that is, for everlasting life in heaven. This is the substance of the reason; and then that life everlasting is further described in divers particulars; so that these two things are contained in this verse:

1. Generally the state of the reason, shewing the height and eminency of Abraham's faith; he looked for everlasting life.

2. A particular description of that life eternal.

1. In the general state of the reason, many worthy points are to be considered:

- (1). First, in the very context and framing of the reason, observe how Abraham therefore liveth as a stranger, patiently in that country which was his own, because he looked for heaven after this life. Hence we learn, that hope to win heaven, worketh patience and contentment in all estates and conditions of life. Thus reasoneth the Holy Ghost here; Abraham was content to live in no city, but in tents, as a stranger; for he looked for a better city in heaven. So the disciples, grieved at Christ's departure from them, He strengtheneth them with this consolation: In my Father's house are glorious mansions, I go to prepare a place for you (John 14:2).

- (i) The use of this doctrine is necessary for these our days; wherein are many that will say confidently they look to be saved, and hope for heaven; but let any man injure them, or cross them in the least measure, they break out into anger and impatience, yea, often into swearing and blaspheming of God's name. Or if God lay His heavy hand on them or theirs, then instantly they run to wizards, and wise men, that is, even to the bottom of hell for help. These and all such, do foully deceive themselves; for if they truly hoped for that city which is in heaven, no small cross in this world could much trouble them; nor any so great, to drive them into that disquietness as by their oaths they should rend heaven and earth; and as it were confound God and all His creatures. Or if they truly persuaded themselves that God would give them heaven at their end; they would be afraid and ashamed to run to the devil to remove God's

hand from them; for assuredly that man cares not what God layeth on him in this life, who is persuaded that after this life God will give him heaven.

(ii) Secondly, this doctrine gives us a worthy direction for comfort under the cross. For if Abraham bore all this patiently, because he looked for heaven; then it must teach us that when God layeth any cross on us, if we would have the bitterness thereof allayed, we must not look on it with both our eyes, but with one eye on the cross, and with the other on the city prepared for us in heaven; where is no cross, no woe, no sorrow, nor misery; but where God Himself will wipe away all tears from our eyes (Rev. 21:4). There can be no affliction so bitter but this meditation will mitigate it, and yield comfort and contentment in the sharpest pangs thereof.

(2). In the second place, Abraham waiting for heaven, when he sojourned on the earth, giveth us an excellent pattern of Christian life. Whilst we are on earth, we must wait for heaven, and look and long after it; there must our joy and our affections be. So teacheth the apostle (Col 3:1), If ye be risen with Christ, seek ye the things that are above. And (Phil. 3:20), we must have our conversation in heaven, though we live on earth. How this may be, cannot be better expressed than by a comparison:

A merchant that is a freeman in London, and there hath wife, children and living; travelleth as a merchant into Turkey, or Barbary, or Spain; there he lives, there is his body, but all his thoughts and desires of his heart are at home; and all the hazard of his life and goods are to preserve and help his estate there. So we in this world are but strangers; but we are freemen in heaven; therefore our thoughts must be there, and all our cares here should be nothing, but how to procure us sure and good estates in heaven. This if we do

seriously intend, and carefully endeavour, then we are good children of Abraham our father; and thus doing, we have our conversation in heaven, though we live on earth. And this we should do the rather, because generally the world is full of such men who (as the same place saith) mind nothing but earthly things. Now it is a hard thing for a man to be unlike the world, and to resist multitudes, and general examples; but we must still remember that we are Abraham's children, and children must labour to be like their father, and not the common multitudes; and it must more move a good child what his father alone doth, than what is done by many other.

(3). Thirdly, let us observe, how God promising Abraham only the land of Canaan, that is, a temporal inheritance; he looks further, for a city in heaven. This he did out of his faith; for he knowing that Canaan was but a type of heaven, therefore in consideration of the earthly Canaan, he arose to a consideration of the heavenly; and in the promise of the earthly, apprehended the heavenly. This is the true and Christian use of all God's blessings given in this life; in them to behold better things laid up in heaven, and shadowed in the other. Men use for their use, spectacles in reading; but they take no pleasure in looking upon them, but at other things, by and through them; so should Christians, through all temporal blessings, look at spiritual and eternal, which are promised and shadowed under the temporal. Thus doth Christ Himself teach us in the very order of the Lord's Prayer; directing us to pray for temporal blessings first in the fourth petition, and then for eternal in the fifth and sixth; as though that the one were introductions and passages to the other. And this made the prophets so ordinarily cover spiritual blessings under temporal; and put temporal deliverances for spiritual, and confusedly oftentimes one for another; because that the holy men of the old church did never rest in view of any temporal promise or blessing; but ascended to contemplation of the higher things in them.

How pitiful then is the practice of worldly men; who use God's blessings so, as they daily abuse and pervert them; using meat to gluttony, raiment to pride, learning to vain glory, speech to flattery, wit to deceit, authority to revenge, callings to oppression; whereas they are all given to be helps in God's service, and furtherances in religion, and means to help us towards heaven. These men look at God's gifts, with the eye of reason, and no further; but if they looked at them, with the eye of faith, as Abraham did; it would teach them to make a heavenly and spiritual use of them, as he did.

(4). Lastly, in the general state of the reason, and of Abraham's practice, observe how he having promise of Canaan, waited for heaven. Now no man waiteth for anything, but that which he hath hope of; nor hopeth truly and properly for anything, but that which he hath assurance of; for hope maketh not ashamed (Rom. 5:5). Not worldly hope, for that hath deceived no more than ever trusted it; but hope in God never deceived man; nor went any away disappointed, that hoped in God. Therefore here it is apparent that hope of heaven goeth with assurance; and this assurance must be particular to the believer, as the belief and faith is.

But the papists say, This is true indeed of Abraham; he had not only hope, but full assurance; but that came by extraordinary revelation; so that this is a rare example, and his particular revelation is no general warrant to us.

We answer from St Paul (Rom. 4:11) that Abraham is the father of the faithful; and that his faith is a pattern for all Christians to follow; for else, why doth the apostle so far extol and set forth that faith of his, above 1,300 years after his death; shall it be only for his commendation, and not for our imitation also? Therefore every man that will walk in the steps of holy Abraham, may come with him to

that measure of faith, that he may wait for heaven, with assurance to enjoy it.

2. Now let us come to the particular description of that heaven, which Abraham thus waited for.

A city having a foundation, whose maker and builder is God.

The description hath three parts;

(1). It is said to be a city.

(2). That hath a foundation.

(3). That God made and built it.

(1). For the first:

Abraham by his faith waited for heaven; but for which? For there are three heavens, or differences of heaven in the Scriptures:

The first, that wherein we live and breathe, birds fly and clouds move.

The second, that wherein the stars are.

The third, is that that is above them both and is invisible; the seat of God's glory, where God revealeth His majesty in special manner to men and angels. This heaven Abraham waited for. For as for the first, he lived in it. And for the second, he knew it as well as most men; for it is credibly thought he was a notable astronomer. So that it was the third heaven he waited for; which he knew this world could not give him; and therefore expected it in another.

Now the heaven which was Abraham's hope, is called a city. A city properly is a place for the habitation of men, compassed with walls, and distinguished by streets and houses. Now properly heaven (or the estate of holy men in heaven) is not a city; but as elsewhere in the Scripture it is called a house, a tabernacle, a temple, an inheritance, a kingdom; so is it here called a city; namely, for the resemblance it hath thereunto, which consisteth specially in four points:

(i) A city hath many houses, greater, less, and for all sorts. So in heaven also there are many mansions (John 14:2), places of glory for all men; none need to fear that he shall not have fulness of joy, and perfect happiness.

(ii) A city is built, and at first was ordained to this end: that many citizens might live together in concord and amity. So the kingdom of heaven is an heavenly city, where the saints of God shall live in perfect peace and love, with fulness of joy every one in himself, and each one in another.

(iii) The goodness or excellency of a city consists in this: to have good laws, good magistrates to execute them, and good people performing subjection and obedience. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is a most perfect city, wherein God's laws are the only laws, and they shall be written in men's hearts; where each one is a sufficient governor of himself, and yet all subject to God; and their God unto them all in all.

(iv) A city is a place where generally are all necessaries and comforts for man's life; one part of the country hath this commodity, another that; but in the city are all, either brought into it, or of itself. So in heaven are all parts of perfection, and all complements of happiness, to make the state of God's children there infinitely blessed.

Such a glorious place is the city that was Abraham's hope.

Now for the use hereof.

(i) First, is heaven such a city? Here is a notable comfort to the poor and plain countryman, who lives in the simplicity of the country life, tilling the ground, or keeping cattle; and it may be never saw, or (at the least) never tasted of the pleasures and delights of cities: If he serve God, and keep a good conscience, here is his happiness, he shall be citizen in the high and heavenly Jerusalem; that city which was the hope of the holy men of God in all ages.

(ii) Secondly, this may teach citizens in the great pompous and populous cities of this world, to labour also to be citizens in heaven; for that is a city also, and the best on earth are but shadows of it. And it may shame them that are drowned in the pleasures and delicacies of earthly cities, and care not nor look after the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; as it is called (Heb. 12:22). But alas, it seems they care not for this shame; for where is security, wantonness, profaneness, oppressions so common, as in these great cities? And as in the apostles' time, the country town Berea was more zealous and religious than the rich and stately city of Thessalonica (Acts 17:11). So is it generally to this day, especially at such places in the country where teaching and knowledge is. But let such cities know that as they have better means and more comforts, and their very nature should put them in mind, and make them in love with heaven; so they shall receive greater damnation.

(iii) Lastly, cities are places of freedom, and all such great places have some notable privileges; therefore men desire to be free in such places; as it is to be seen in London, Rome, Venice, c. even the greatest persons will be content to be free of them, and many seek it, and pay dear for it; or at least work a long time for it. But heaven is the city of cities, the perfection of beauty and true happiness;

therefore let everyone that desires either honour or happiness, labour and strive to be a freeman of heaven, and never rest till he know he be. And let those that live in cities, when they are admitted freemen (as daily some are), remember what a blessedness it will be if they can be admitted freemen of the glorious city which is above; and how little that shall avail them, if they want this, which was the hope and joy of Abraham and all holy men.

To go further, this city which Abraham's faith waited for, is described by two points:

(2). That it hath a foundation.

(3). That the maker and builder was God.

(2). For the first, heavenly Jerusalem hath a foundation, such a one as no city in this world hath; and by this phrase, the Holy Ghost insinuates unto us what be the properties of heaven; which be two:

(i) The state of heaven is unchangeable.

(ii) It is everlasting and eternal.

(i) First, the state of the elect in heaven, and their glory there, is not subject to corruption or the least alteration; as appeareth in that notable and lofty description of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10ff.), It hath a great wall and high, twelve gates, twelve angels for porters; and the wall had twelve foundations, of twelve sorts of most excellent precious stones; and the wall itself was jasper, and the city pure gold, like crystal. The state of it is shadowed by precious stones and gold; to signify as well the durableness, as the excellency thereof. And it is called the mountain of God's holiness (Psa. 15:1); hills are hardly removed, and therefore David saith, that Mount Zion

cannot be removed, but remaineth for ever (Psa. 125:1). Now, if that be true of Mount Zion in this world; which must needs be taken either literally, for the state of the visible church, which cannot be utterly overthrown; or mystically, for the state of God's grace, which in this world cannot totally and finally be lost. I say, if this Mount Zion standeth fast, and cannot be removed; how much more true is it of the state of glory in heaven, and of the triumphant church, and of Heavenly Zion; that it is so unchangeable, so durable, so unremovable, that it cannot be shaken, but standeth fast for ever. And in this respect, well may the apostle say here, It hath a foundation, which the Holy Ghost in the Revelation saith, to have twelve foundations.

(ii) Secondly, the state of the elect in heaven is not only sure, but everlasting; that is, without end (Psa. 37:18), The inheritance of holy men is perpetual; and therefore St Peter saith that the inheritance reserved in heaven for us is immortal and not fading away (1 Pet. 1:4). There is the unchangableness; it is immortal; there is the eternity of it. And this is meant by having a foundation; for in this world, so much the longer doth anything endure, as the foundation is stronger. Therefore seeing the heavenly city hath such a foundation, no marvel though it endure for ever.

Now put these two together, and they shew the perfect excellency of that city which is both unchangeable and eternal. Where we learn the great difference betwixt the state of that world and this present world wherein we live in the body. For what is there in this world so excellent, so precious, so costly, so artificial; but is subject to both alteration, and in the end to dissolution? The longest day hath its night; and the longest life endeth in death, after many miseries and tossings; the longest empires and mightiest monarchies had their period, after many mutations; the statliest and strongest cities ended

in ruin, after many civil broils, massacres and other miseries. So that no glory, no strength, no happiness, nothing at all is there in this world that is either constant or perpetual, but subject to utter dissolution in the end; and in the meantime, to pitiful alterations. So weak a foundation hath this world, and the best things in it. But contrariwise, the glory of heaven hath such a foundation as it is both unchangeable and eternal.

The consideration of this difference hath manifold and profitable use:

(a) First, we may see how reasonable the counsel of the apostle is (1 Tim. 6:17), Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, and put not their trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God. For what a misery and vanity is it, to trust in that that is uncertain, and therefore will deceive them? The apostle tells them what to do, namely, Do good, and be rich in good works, and be ready to distribute; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the times to come, that they may obtain eternal life (1 Tim. 6:18,19); that is that they so spend their riches in holiness and charity, that they may in the end attain heaven, which is the city that hath a foundation; and who would not spend riches which are so uncertain, for heaven, which is so certain a glory?

(b) Secondly, this must teach us to follow the counsel of Christ Jesus (Matt. 6:19,20), Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth, where moth and canker corrupt, and thieves steal; but in heaven, where is neither canker, moth, thief, nor any other corruption. Every man naturally must have his treasure, and that is it whereon he sets his heart. Now that is unworthy of a man's heart, which will be lost we know not how soon. But let us make heaven our treasure, the glory whereof is both eternal and unchangeable.

(c) Again, seeing nothing here is certain, we must learn to seek sound comfort where it may be had. Seek it in this world, and it will fail us; but seek it in the sincere worship of God, and that will minister such comfort in this life, and such glory in heaven, as hath a foundation, and will never fail us.

(d) Further, this must put us in mind of the holy king's advice, which is to remember our creator in the days of our youth (Eccl. 12:1). Seeing this world is so uncertain, and our life hath so weak a foundation, as we are not sure to live to come to old age; every man therefore is to hear the conclusion of all, which is to fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13); and this the sooner, the better. For else, for a little foolish and vain pleasure, transitory, and which hath no foundation; we shall venture the losing of that glorious city, which hath a sure foundation.

It followeth in the description;

3. Whose maker and builder is God.

The second point in the description of this city is that God was the maker, builder, or author of it. These two words are both one, and therefore it is a needless labour of some that would distinguish between them; for the meaning is, God made, that is, prepared the glory of heaven, and He built it; as though he should say, Heavenly Jerusalem is a glorious city; and no marvel though it be so, for God made it. And if you will needs that being a city, it must be built, be it so; for God is the builder of it.

This doctrine is evident in the Scriptures (Psa. 136:5), God by His wisdom made the heavens. And here is another main difference between this world and the glory of heaven; The cities of this world were built by man, but heaven by God Himself. The art and skill of

men build the cities of the earth, and sometimes by the covetousness, or other corruption of man, as is manifest in the beginning; for Cain, a covetous, cruel, and ambitious man, built the first city in the world; but holy and good men, have not the honour to be builders of this city; no, they are citizens of it, but God only is the author and builder of it.

No man may doubt hereof because this third heaven is invisible; for the angels also are invisible, and yet God's creatures. Besides, our Creed teacheth that God is the creator of all things visible and invisible.

If we doubt why God made it, seeing He made all things for man, and man in this world hath no sight nor use of it; the answer is that God made it for two ends:

First, to be His own glorious palace (not wherein He would confine His being, or His presence, but), wherein He would make His glory most apparent; and wherein His glory should in a sort dwell. In which regards, it is called His throne (Isa. 66:1). And in our Lord's Prayer, we say by Christ's own teaching, that God our Father is in heaven. Therefore as princes build themselves palaces, to show their power and puissance, and to magnify themselves, and to be fit habitations for their greatness; so God made the third heaven to be the throne of His glory.

Secondly, He had also a respect herein to His creatures; for He made that heaven, therein to reveal His majesty and glory to His reasonable creatures: angels and men; and (by shewing them His glory) to glorify them. For in God's presence is the fulness of joy (Psa. 16:11). And in this sense is it true that God made all things for man (as man for Himself); namely, all things either for his soul, or body, or both; either for his use in this life, or in the other. And so the third

heaven was made for man's use; not in this life, but in the life to come; for his soul until the last judgment, and after that for both soul and body.

Hence we learn divers instructions:

(i) First, in that the third heaven, which never was seen with the eye of man, is here positively affirmed to be made by God; we learn that therefore it is one of God's creatures; and not eternal, as some hold, and go about to prove thus: God is eternal; but He must be in some place; and heaven is the seat and place of God; therefore it is coeternal with God. But I answer from God's word; that though heaven be the seat and throne of God's glory, and where He manifesteth and magnifieth His glory; yet it is not the place of His substance and being; for that is infinite and incomprehensible; and it is against the Christian faith to imagine the Godhead to be comprehended or contained in any place (1 Kin. 8:27), The heavens, yea the heavens of heavens cannot comprehend thee O Lord; how much more unable is this house that I have built?

Nor is it material, that we know not on what day it was created; or that it is not named amongst the works of the creation. For the same is true of the angels also; and it pleased God's wisdom, for special causes, to name no creatures particularly in the creation, but visible ones; whereas we know both from our Creed, and God's Word itself, that He is the creator of all things, both visible and invisible. Therefore, though we know not what day the third heaven was made, yet is it sufficient that here is said, it was made and built by God Himself. Whereupon it necessarily followeth that it is a creature, and not co-eternal with the Godhead.

(ii) Secondly, here appears the weakness of one of the commonest arguments used for the defence of the ubiquity and

consubstantiation. Christ (say they) is present bodily in the Eucharist; and they prove it thus: Christ is in heaven, and He is God; but heaven is everywhere, for God is everywhere; and where God is, there heaven is; (as where the king is, there the court is): Therefore, Christ may be in the Sacrament, and yet be in heaven notwithstanding.

I answer, the ground is false. Heaven is not everywhere, for then it is in hell; which to affirm is absurdity, confusion and impiety. Indeed God's presence is everywhere; and where His presence is, there is His power; as where the king's presence is, there is also his power and authority; and there may be any seat or court of justice; and so where he is, the court is. But if you take the court for some one of his chief houses, then the saying is not true. But contrariwise, as the king's power is, wheresoever his presence is; and yet he may have one house more sumptuous and magnificent than all the rest, which may be called his court; by an excellency above other; and that court is not always where the king is, but in some set and certain place, and not removable. So God's power and glory is everywhere; and yet His most glorious court, the third heaven, is not everywhere, but in His limited and appointed place, where God's glory shineth more than in any other place.

Again, if heaven, properly taken, be everywhere, then it is God Himself; for that that is everywhere must needs be deified; and indeed some, to maintain this opinion, have said little less. But if the Holy Ghost may moderate this disputation, He plainly tells us here that God is the maker and builder of it. Therefore, assuredly, it is not God, but one of God's creatures.

(iii) Thirdly, and lastly, let us observe the description of heaven included in these two words, maker and builder. God made it, that is,

it is one of His creatures; He made it as well as the rest; and He builded it, that is (as the word signifieth), made it with art, or He bestowed skill and wisdom upon it. For though we may not imagine any substantial difference between these two words for matter; yet in signification, they differ; and so far are we to observe it.

Here then we learn that the third heaven is like a piece of work, wherein an excellent workman hath spent his art and shewed his skill; that is, that the highest heaven is a most glorious place, and surpasseth all other creatures of God in glory and excellence, so far as therein shineth the glory, skill and wisdom of the Creator, more than in any other creature. In which regards, it is no marvel that the Holy Ghost says in another place, that the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor man's heart conceived, what God hath there prepared for them that love Him (1 Cor. 2:9). And St Paul himself, though he had the honour of being taken up into the third heaven, and to see and hear the glory which is there; yet afterwards he could not express the glory he had seen. And this was figured in the Temple of Jerusalem, which was the mirror, and beauty of the world; for the building whereof, God both chose the skilfullest men, and indued them also with extraordinary gifts; namely, Bezaleel and Aholiab. Now, as thereby that Temple was the most excellent piece of work that ever was in this world, made by man; so the highest heaven (which was mystically prefigured in Solomon's Temple), is the most excellent of all the works of God.

Uses:

The use of this doctrine is not to be omitted:

(i) Firstly, if that be so excellent and glorious a place, we must all labour to come thither; for above all things, it seems worthy to be sought for. People come out of all places of the country to dwell in

great towns, and rich cities; and men labour to be freemen there, and to have their children free in them; and even the greatest men will have their houses either in, or near them; that so, though they will not always dwell in them, yet they may sojourn in them at their pleasures now and then. And why all this? But because, first, they are places beautiful, and many ways pleasant to the eye. Secondly, full, and frequented with the best company. Thirdly, replenished with abundance of all things needful for man's life, for necessity, comfort and delight. Fourthly, they enjoy many privileges and freedoms. And lastly, all this is most true of such cities where the king keeps his court.

If this be so, then how is heaven to be sought for? Behold here a goodly city, a city of God (whereof London, Paris, Rome, Venice, nay, Jerusalem are scarce shadows), the true Jerusalem, the joy of the whole earth; nay, the joy of the world, and the glory of all God's creatures, made immediately with the hand, and built with the skill and cunning of God Himself. The princes of the world, and even of Rome itself, wondered at the beauty, and were amazed at the magnificence of Jerusalem and the Temple, and yet it was but a type and figure hereof. For that had indeed the glory of the world upon her; but the New Jerusalem hath the glory of God upon her (Rev. 21:2).

Shall we then seek to dwell in the cities of this world, and not labour to come to heaven? Are they any way excellent, wherein heaven is not much more to be desired? Are they beautiful, and is not it the beauty of the world? Read the 21st chapter of the Revelation, and suppose that the beauty of it were but outward and worldly and sensible to human capacity; yet is it far more excellent than any ever was in this world. And is not there the company of the deity, of Christ's humanity, of the holy angels, and all good men? And is not there

abundance of whatsoever belongs to perfect happiness? And is not there freedom from the devil, sin and death? And is it not the court of God, the King of glory? Then why do we not sigh and groan, and long to be freemen of this glorious city? And though we cannot come to it, as long as we live in this world; yet why do we not strive to come as near it as may be? In this world, when a man cannot dwell in the heart of a city, yet he will rather dwell in the suburbs than he will not be near it; and being there, he knows he can soon step into the city. So let us in this life come as near heaven as we may; let us get into the suburbs and dwell there.

The suburbs of heaven is God's true church on earth, where His Word is freely known and preached, and His holy sacraments administered, and therein God truly served. Let us associate ourselves to this church, and live according to the holy laws thereof. This is the suburbs of heaven; so shall we be ready to enter into the glorious city itself, when the Lord calls us.

(ii) And as this is for ourselves; so if we love our children, or care for their advancement, let us make them freemen of that city, whose maker and builder is God; so shall we be sure to have comfort and joy of them here, and with them in heaven. But if we will have them freemen in heaven, we must make them God's apprentices on earth; they must serve out their time, else they get no freedom. This time is all their life. Men are deceived that let their children be the devil's slaves here, and think to have them free in heaven; let us then bind our children as apprentices to God, that is, make them His servants here; then assuredly, as in their repentance and regeneration here, they are born freemen of heaven; so after this life they shall enjoy the freedoms and privileges of that heavenly city, which was made and built by the wisdom of God.

(iii) Lastly, here we see how true it is that David teacheth (Psa. 15:4), No vile person can come into heaven. And no marvel; for if men thus and thus defamed cannot be freemen in the cities on earth built by men, is it likely that sinners and profane men, that care not for repentance and regeneration (for they be the vile men), shall be admitted into that city, whose maker and builder is God? It is the holy city, no unclean thing can enter into it (Rev. 21:8). It is God's holy mountain, how shall ungodliness ascend thither (Psa. 15:1)? It is the New Jerusalem, how shall the old man, that is sinful corruption, get into it? We must therefore cast off the old man with his lusts, and be renewed in holiness; we must become penitent sinners for our lives past, and new men for hereafter; or else let us not look to have any part in heaven.

And good reason, for God is the maker and builder of it. But He is not the maker of sin, but the devil and ourselves brought it out; and think we the devil's work shall come into heaven? Or that God will build a house for the devil's slaves to dwell in? Let us not be deceived. But contrariwise, grace and holiness is God's work; as our souls and bodies were the work of His hands, so our regeneration is much more the work of His own power and mercy. That man therefore who can say, God as once He made me a man, so He hath again made and built me a new man, and a new creature; that man is he, that shall be an inhabitant in that heavenly city, whose maker and builder is the same God.

In this holy way of faith and repentance did the holy fathers walk to the city; as David saith in the name of them all, Thus will I wait for thee in holiness.

And thus doubtless did the holy patriarch Abraham, who as he was the father of our faith, so was he also a pattern of repentance and

holy life; and in that holiness he waited for this city that hath a foundation, whose maker and builder is God.

Hitherto we have heard the holy practice of Abraham's faith in two examples.

There is much more spoken of the excellency of his faith; but by the way, the Holy Ghost interlaceth a worthy example, even of a woman's faith; namely, Sarah, his wife. The sixth example in the order of the whole, followeth in the words of the two next verses.

“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.” Hebrews 11:11.

Next to Abraham, who is called the father of our faith, or of faithful men, followeth Sarah, who was also mystically, the mother of believers. Next to the husband followeth the wife; nay, Abraham’s faith is commended both before her and after her; and hers enclosed in the midst.

By the way here observe how God honours holy marriage, and observes the decorum and dignity of it. He not only allows, or commends the faith of Abel, who it may be was unmarried; but as we see of married men also. And it is worthy of our observation that of all these whom the Holy Ghost here records for their faith and holiness, they were all married except Abel; of whom, it is not certain whether he were or no.

It appears therefore that God, as He ordained holy marriage, so he always honoured it, both with His grace on earth, and His glory in heaven; as well, if not better, than any other state of life. They therefore do spit in the face of God Himself, who any way disgrace it, and they especially who allow fornication or adultery in any sort of men, rather than it, as some papists do. But here we may observe further, how God maintains dignity and decorum of it; He placeth Abraham and Sarah together, and puts none between them, to shew the inseparable unity that is to be between them; so far, as that even in story, they are to be set together; and how heinous their presumption is that dare in any way to attempt to separate or part that unity.

He placeth Abraham first, to shew the dignity and pre-eminence of the man, whom for her sin God hath set over her; not only for her head, but for her guide and governor; and to teach the man that he and his example should be first, and should be a light unto her; to shame them who come behind their wives in faith and holiness. He placeth Abraham both before and after her, and her in the midst; to teach her that her glory and honour, every way, is the virtue and worthiness of her husband, her head under God; who is to go before her to give her good example; and to come after, to oversee her courses, and on all sides to be a shelter and defence unto her.

These things may not unfitly be noted in this context. Now let us come to the words, which are in these points:

I. Who believed: Even Sarah.

II. What she believed: God's promise to bear Isaac.

III. The impediments of that faith, which were two:

1. Her age.

2. Her barrenness.

IV. The effects of this, her faith, which were three:

1. Thereby she conceived seed.

2. Brought forth Isaac.

3. Had a great issue and posterity by him.

V. The ground of her faith: She judged Him faithful which had promised.

All these are laid down in this verse or the next.

I. The first point is, the person of whom this story is; Sarah a woman; even she believed. We have heard some examples of notable men, but behold here, a woman chronicled for her faith and holy obedience, as well as men.

Where we learn, that saving faith, and consequently salvation itself, is not proper to one sex, but to both men and women. The woman indeed was the first that brought in sin; and being deceived herself by the devil, she deceived man. In which sense the apostle saith (1 Tim. 2:14), The man was not deceived, but the woman; and she was in the transgression. And for that cause, grievous calamities and much bitterness was laid upon that sex, in bearing and bringing up children, and in subjection. In which regards they might think themselves forsaken of God for their fault. For the preventing whereof, the apostle here, or rather the Holy Ghost by him, teacheth us that true faith and salvation by the Messiah belongeth to Sarah as well as Abraham; to women as well as to men. And St Peter also most plainly teacheth us (1 Pet. 3:7), that they are heirs together with their husbands of the grace of life. The use whereof, as it discovereth the monstrous and unnatural madness of some men, who have called into question the possibility of their salvation; yea some whether they have souls or not; so it giveth encouragement to women to serve that God in zeal and sincerity, which hath been so merciful unto their sin; and who, though he hath subjected them in body unto their husbands, yet hath made their souls partakers with them, of the same hope of immortal life.

Yet withal we may observe, how few the Holy Ghost here recordeth; namely, but one or two women, amongst many men. For so it hath been in all ages, those that have been good, were excellent; but they

were few in comparison of men; which, as it is the more commendation to them that are good, so it must stir up all women professing religion, to labour in the imitation of the faith of their grandmother Sarah; that so they may be some of those few.

1. But let us enter into further, and more particular consideration, who this Sarah was; especially seeing she is the only woman of the Jewish nation whose faith is here remembered.

She was the wife of Abraham, the grand patriarch of the age between the flood and the giving of the law. And of her we read this story amongst others (Gen. 18:13). God by His angel appearing to her husband and her, made a promise that within the year they should have a son; both heard it, and both laughed to hear it; Abraham in joy and admiration, and therefore was not reprov'd; and she in doubtfulness, and a conceit of almost impossibility, and was for it sharply reprov'd of the angel. Yet behold this Sarah, that even now laughed to hear such a promise, as being a fond conceit and merely impossible; yet afterward believeth, and in so good a measure, as her faith is here registered to all posterity.

In her example, we may learn a good lesson. It was a bad thing in Sarah to laugh at God's word, though it seem'd never so high above her conceit; but it was good and commendable that she correcteth her fault, and testifieth her amendment by believing. We all follow Sarah's fault, but few her repentance. Many in our church are mockers of our religion, and of the ministers and professors thereof; and all religion that standeth not with their humours, is no mere regard of them than toys or devices; and they are counted fools or hypocrites that think otherwise. But alas, these men know not how vile a sin they commit, while they laugh at God's word. For if her fault was such, who laughed at that which seem'd to her almost

impossible, and yet without any profaneness; what shall become of them, that out of their carnality and fleshly profaneness, do make but a sport at all God's ordinances, promises and commandments; and at all religion, more than serveth their own turn? Let such men be warned, to cease mocking, and lay aside reviling of others, and begin soberly and seriously to believe; else they will find it sharp kicking against the pricks; and dangerous, playing with edge-tools.

Furthermore, Sarah that laughed in doubting, yet (withal) believes. This teacheth us, that true faith is joined always with doubting in all God's children. If any object, that that followeth not here; for she first doubted, and then believed; when she doubted, she believed not, and when she believed, she doubted not.

I answer, It is not so, but the contrary, as I will prove. For Sarah was no infidel, utterly to deny and gainsay God's Word when she heard it; but only finding it in all reason impossible, she therefore presently yielded not to it, but laughed at it as a matter past ordinary course, yet withal she regarded who spake it; namely God, and therefore forthwith judged it possible with God, though impossible in reason, and so at last constantly believed it, yet still her reason gainsaying it; so that she never doubted so, but that she in some part believed it. And when she believed it most steadfastly, yet she something doubted of it; reason said it could not be, faith said it might be. Therefore, as when reason overruling, yet she had some sparks of faith; so when her faith was predominant, there remained some relics of doubting; for as reason cannot overthrow true faith, so the best faith in this world cannot fully vanquish reason.

This is the doctrine of God's Word (Mark 9:24). Jesus bidding the father of the child possessed to believe; and then his child should be dispossessed; he answered crying with tears, Lord, I believe, help my

unbelief. There is faith and unbelief in one soul at one time, in one action, upon one object, and what is unbelief, but doubting or worse?

And Christ often reproveth His disciples for their doubting; for He calls them, O ye of little faith; and ye all know that they then had true faith; yea St Peter himself, most famous for his faith, is reproved in the same words, O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt? (Matt. 14:31). He had a little faith, therefore some faith; a little faith, therefore much doubting; therefore it is apparent, a man may have in his soul at once, both faith and doubting; yea, commonly, we have a grain of mustard seed, or a mite of faith, and a mountain of doubting.

The use of this doctrine:

(1). First, discovereth the nakedness of many professing themselves Christians, who care not how they live, yet say they believe in Christ, and look to be saved by Him. Ask how they know it; they answer, they know no other; Ask when they began, they say they did ever so; Ask if they doubt, they answer they would be ashamed so to do. But alas, here is nothing but ignorance and presumption. Our religion can never be disgraced by such men; for they have it not, they know it not; for if they did, they would shame to answer so. These men have no faith at all; for where it is, doubting doth always shew itself. And he that knows he believes, knows also he doubts; and the more he believes, the more he knoweth and feeleth his doubting; for where these two are, they are always opposite, and shew their contrary natures; the one is the spirit, the other is flesh and corruption. And these, saith the apostle, do lust one against another (Gal. 5:17). He therefore that thinketh he is wholly spirit, and hath no flesh or corruption in him, is nothing but corruption; and he that imagineth that he hath perfect faith, and no doubting, hath no faith at all in him, but carnal presumption.

(2). Secondly, here is comfort to all such as have faith and grace, and yet are daily troubled with temptations; let not such be dismayed, though they find in themselves much doubting and diffidence. For Sarah believed, and yet she doubted; yea, notwithstanding all her doubting, she believed so excellently, as her faith is here made a pattern to all holy matrons for ever. He therefore that is even buffeted by Satan with temptations of doubting, let not him be dismayed, as though he had no faith; but let him be assured, his doubting doth not bewray itself, but that faith makes the opposition; and therefore let him strive with tears and prayers to God, and say, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.

2. Thus we see the person, Sarah; but what is the action which she did? It is implied in these words:

Through faith, Sarah c.

Her action is, she believed. This virtue of faith, and this action of believing is the matter of all this chapter. These holy men and women had other holy virtues; but their faith is that alone which is here commended.

Now particularly for Sarah's faith, here is one notable thing to be observed: the very same Word of God, which she believed, and for believing whereof she is here registered, at the same she also laughed; but behold, her faith is recorded, her laughing is not; her faith is commended, her fault silenced. In which holy and merciful practice of God, we learn:

(1). First, that God accepteth true faith, though it be attended with many infirmities. As a king is content to give a beggar an alms, though he receive it with a hand shaking with the palsy; so, God is well pleased with our faith, though diseased with infirmities, and

bestoweth grace on a believing soul, though shaken with many temptations.

In a word, God accepteth soundness of faith, though it be but small, and more looks at (in His mercy) a man's little faith, than his many faults. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax (Isa. 42:3). When a man is broken in heart and dejected in soul, in sight of his many sins and little grace, God will not break this bruised reed, but will comfort and strengthen him. And when any life of grace appears in a man (as flax that smoketh, but will not burn out), God will not quench it, but will rather kindle it, and give life unto it.

Let this teach us to take in good part, the holy and honest endeavours of our brethren, though they cannot do so well as they would, or should. Let us not exact too much, and too hastily upon them, but expect in meekness the working of God's grace; and in the meantime, think well of Sarah's faith, though it be with laughing.

(2). Secondly, here we may learn that God rather observes and regards good things in His children, than their faults and imperfections; He writes up Sarah's faith, He nameth not her laughing. This is from the goodness of His nature, being goodness itself, and therefore most easily apprehendeth and takes notice of the least goodness, wherever He finds it.

Thus should we deal one with another; what good thing we see in any man, we should observe and commend it; his faults we should not see, but cover and omit them. But the course is contrary; the common table talk of the world is nothing but of men's faults, and to rip up their imperfections. But if they have never so many good properties, we can bury them all, and pass them over in silence. This argueth the malice and naughtiness of our nature; which, being evil,

doth delight in nothing but evil; and being corrupt, feeds, as doth the filthy horse fly, on nothing but corruption. But let us remember the practice of God, and learn to conceal faults, and of our tongues to talk of the good things and virtues in our brethren. So shall we resemble the Lord, who though Sarah laughed (not in an holy admiration, but in unbelief), yet, forasmuch as afterward she believed; God hath matched her with the noblest believers, and holiest men that have been in the world.

Thus much for the first point, the person and her action: she believed.

II. Now the second is, what she believed. This is included and necessarily implied in the last words of the verse, She judged Him faithful, which had promised.

The thing she believed, was the word or promise of God; particularly His promise that she should bear Isaac in her old age; of which promise, and the circumstances of it, we may read (Gen. 18:13ff.).

Here the only question is, By what faith did she believe this?

And the answer is, by true saving faith. And it is proved thus: Abraham believed this promise by the faith that justified him (Rom. 4:10,11). But Abraham and Sarah believed it both by one faith, therefore Sarah believed that promise by the faith that also justified her. Where we learn, that saving faith apprehendeth not only the great promise of redemption by Christ, but all other inferior promises that depend upon it. For here we see Abraham and Sarah take hold of the promises of a temporal blessing, by the same faith whereby formerly they had laid hold on the promise of eternal salvation by the Messiah; so that the object of true faith is:

1. Principal: The promise of salvation by Christ.
2. Secondary: All inferior promises annexed thereunto.

The main promise is: God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, to the end that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). Now true faith, first of all, directly and plainly fasteneth itself on this; but after, and with this, on all other promises that concern soul or body. In the Lord's Prayer, we are bid to pray for temporal blessings, health, peace, competency of wealth, and all other, under the name of daily bread; and we are bound to believe that God will give them, if we ask in faith. Neither is this faith constrained, but free and voluntary, and on a good foundation. For being persuaded that God accepteth us in Christ for salvation, we cannot but withal be persuaded that God will give us all things else needful for us.

This we here note again, because we are wrongfully charged by the papists to hold that faith apprehendeth the promise of salvation alone. But we pass it over, for that we have already spoken something of it.

III. Now followeth the third point; namely, the impediments of her faith, in these words:

When she was past age.

The promise was to have a child; she believed it. Now against childbearing, there are two impediments:

1. Age.
2. Barrenness.

If one be aged, or past the ordinary time, it is hard and unlikely; but if one be very aged and far past it, it is impossible she should conceive and bear a child; thus it stands in reason. Besides, though one be not past age, yet if she be barren (as some by secret reasons in nature are), it is not to be expected she should conceive. Now, both these lay in Sarah's way, for here it is said, she was past age; and another place (Gen. 16:1,2) saith, she was barren.

But it may be objected against Sarah's age, that in the old time they had children till they were of great age. Eve had her son Seth at 130 years old (Gen. 5:3). For Adam and Eve must needs be both of the same age; and after that, Eve bore many sons and daughters. Therefore it may seem that Sarah was not past age at ninety years old. But we are to know that they who began to bear at that age, lived eight or nine hundred years; but Sarah lived after the flood, when ages were brought down to 200, and for the most part to 100 years. Abraham lived but 175 years, and Sarah but 127. She therefore who lived 127 years, and died an old woman, must needs be past age of childbearing at ninety years old.

And besides her age, she was also barren by her natural constitution (as many are and have been), and brought Abraham no children. Yet unto this woman comes a word from God, Sarah shall bear a son. And behold, this same aged and barren woman doth not object desperately these her two hindrances (the one whereof in reason is sufficient against childbearing), but beyond all impediments, and above reason, believeth it shall be so, resting and relying only and wholly on God's word for it.

The use of which notable and faithful practice (so wonderful in a woman) must teach us to rest on God's word and promise, though we have no reason so to do; for example,

When we see our friend's or children's bodies cast into the earth to feed worms, burnt by fire, or eaten by fishes, reason saith that they are gone, they can never be again. We have God's word and assured promise, The dead shall rise; with their bodies shall they rise (Job 19:26; 1 Thess. 4:16). We must therefore believe it, if we will be of the faith of Sarah. God said to her, Age and barrenness shall have a child; she believed it. He saith to us, Dust and rottenness shall live again; nay, He hath often said it; and shall not our faith acknowledge the voice of our God, and believe it as she did?

But let us come to personal promises, as hers was (for this is general); God hath promised grace and pardon to every penitent and believing soul; yea, no man is partaker of the sweetness hereof, without the bitterness of many temptations to the contrary, giving him occasions of doubting, and often even despairing of God's favour. What must a man do in this case? Even believe, though he feels no reason why to believe; and hope above hope. Such was Abraham's and Sarah's faith. And for it, as they were registered in the story of Genesis, so both here, and also Rom. 4, remembered again, and commended for it. Now, suppose that after thy coming to God by faith and repentance, fall into temptations of desertion, wherein, to thy feeling, God's heavy hand and wrath hath seized on thee, and the devil layeth thy sins to thy charge, and tells thee thou art a damned wretch, for thou wert ever an hypocrite, and never hadst faith, and that therefore God is thy enemy. In this case, wherein in reason or in feeling, there is not the least hope of salvation; what must thou do, despair? God forbid. For that is the downfall into hell. No, but hope when there is no hope, keep faith when there is no feeling.

And to strengthen us herein, remember the faith of Job (tried and sifted, though as few have been), who though the arrows of the

Almighty stuck in him, and the venom thereof drunk up his spirit (Job 6:4), yet even then he believed, and would not give over, nor let go his hold, and said, Though thou bring me to dust, yet will I not forsake thee; no, though thou kill me, yet will I trust in thee (Job 13;15). So in the fury of temptations, when the venom of God's wrath seems to drink up our spirits, then must we believe; and in the pangs of death, when God seems ready to kill us, then must we trust in Him. In such cases is the life of faith to be shewed; when reason and feeling say, God is a terrible judge, faith must say, He is a merciful Father.

In our health and welfare and feeling of God's favour, this exhortation may seem tedious; but if we belong to God, if it be not past already, the time is sure to come, when this doctrine will be needful for the best of us all.

Thus we see the excellency of this woman's faith; which is the more commended, by reason of these two so great hindrances.

IV. Now follow the effects of her faith, which are divers; some laid down in this verse, and some in the next.

Received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child.

In these words are two effects:

1. First, by power of her faith she was enabled to conceive; which before she did not, though there were the same reasons in nature why she should.

2. Secondly, she was delivered of a child in her old age, and that child was Isaac; who is therefore called the promised seed, and the child of the promise.

Out of the consideration of these two, we may learn divers good instructions; for seeing they are so near akin in their natures, we will speak of them both jointly together.

(1). First, here we may see that nothing is so hard or difficult which God hath promised, but faith can compass it, and bring it to performance. Christ bad the blind see, the lame to go; He spake, they believed, and they were healed. So here God promiseth a barren, old woman a child. She believeth, and lo, she conceiveth and bringeth forth a son.

The use of this doctrine is for two sorts of people:

(i) First, many in our church being ignorant; when they are moved to learn religion, answer; Alas, they are simple, or not book-learned, or they are dull, and heavy-witted, or they be old and weak, and therefore they can learn nothing; or if they do, they cannot remember it. But here is nothing but vain excuses; for they want not wit to learn religion, if they have wit to buy and sell, to know a fair day from a foul, good meat from ill, dear from cheap, winter from summer. If they have wit to practice the civil actions of the world, they have wit enough to conceive the grounds of religion, and to get so much knowledge as may suffice for a ground of that faith which will save their souls; so that they want nothing but grace and diligence to use the means. To them therefore here is matter of good advice. Let such men learn but one promise of God out of the Holy Scripture, as this: Seek first the kingdom of God, and all things also shall be given unto you (Matt. 6:33). Or this: Cast all your care on Him, for He careth for you (1 Pet. 5:7). Or this: He that cometh unto me, I cast him not away (John 6:37). Or but this: Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find (Matt. 7:7). Let them learn but one of these, and when they have learned it, believe it, and let their souls

daily feed on that faith; and they shall see what will follow: even a wonderful blessing upon that poor beginning. This their faith will so content and please their hearts, that it will urge them forward to get more, and will make them both desirous, and capable of more knowledge and grace; and will make them even hunger and thirst after knowledge and grace (whereas, he that knoweth no promise, nor believes it, contents himself in ignorance and error). And this shall everyone find, that will carefully use the means that God appoints, and will begin to learn but one lesson at the first. For as old, barren Sarah, believing God's promise, conceives and brings forth; so old, simple, plain, dull countrymen, believing but one promise of God's Word, shall conceive and bring forth daily more and more fruits of knowledge and grace.

(ii) Secondly, others who have made better proceedings in religion, do see their sins, and do much bewail them, but they cannot overcome their corruptions; yea, many there are, to whom their sins and inward corruptions are more grievous and burdensome than all bodily wants or miseries in the world; yet see they not how to conquer their corruptions; but, alas, are oftentimes foiled by them, to their great discomfort.

Let these men know the want of faith is the cause hereof; for that they do not sufficiently ruminare, and consider the promises of God made in that behalf, nor use the means God hath appointed; to the use whereof He hath annexed His promises of help against sin. Let them therefore lay God's Word and promises unto their consciences, in holy and frequent meditations. Let them carefully use the means that God hath appointed, hearing and reading His Word, receiving the holy communion, earnest and frequent prayer, craving also the prayers of others; and let them sharpen these holy exercises by fasting, watching, holy conferences with others, visitations of others

afflicted like themselves, oft revealing their estate to their godly pastors. Let them continue thus doing, and rest confidently on the Word and promise of God, with the steadfast foot of faith, and they shall see that old Sarah shall have strength to conceive; that is, that their poor souls shall receive strength to tread upon Satan, to conquer their corruptions, and to conceive and bring forth many worthy fruits of holiness, to their joy and comfort in their latter experience; as Isaac was to Sarah in her elder age.

(2). The next doctrine we may learn is; that whereas Sarah, by her faith in God's promise, conceives and brings forth; therefore children are the immediate blessing of the Lord; for Sarah bare Isaac, not by any ordinary strength or power of nature, but through faith she received strength to conceive. Neither is this so in her only (wherein there was a miraculous work of God's power), but in all. Some are indeed barren by constitution, and these cannot conceive, unless by God's power as Sarah did. But some have no children, who in all natural reason might conceive. For as God gave the law, and thereby a gift and power to increase and multiply (Gen, 1:22), so he reserved the execution of it to Himself, and power to alter or dispense, to add or diminish, as it pleaseth Him. Therefore saith the psalmist (Psa. 127:3), Lo, children are the inheritance of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward. And speaking of them (Psa. 128:4), Lo, thou shalt be blessed that feareth the Lord.

The use is, to teach parents therefore to bring them up as God's blessings, and not only to give them corporal necessities (for so they do their beasts), but to nurture them in holy discipline, by sowing the seeds of religion in their hearts. If this they want, they have nothing, though you leave them earldoms. And herein is the saying true, Better unborn than untaught. The law and power to increase and multiply is given to beasts in their kind; all as well as to us (Gen.

1:22). Therefore unless we do more than provide for their bodies, we differ little from them; but make them know God, and so we make them fellows with the angels. If parents did thus, it cannot be expressed what blessings would come thereby to church and commonwealth.

(3). Thirdly and lastly, let us here know and learn that this holy matron Sarah figureth unto us mystically the spiritual Jerusalem, the church of God. Allegories are sparingly to be taught, else much unsound doctrine may cumber men's consciences; but this is sound and sure, for it is the apostle's (Gal. 4:23ff.); By Hagar and Sarah other things are meant; for these two mothers are two testaments; Hagar, Sinai which gendereth unto bondage, and Sarah, Jerusalem which is free, and from above, the mother of us all. Now the resemblance between natural Sarah the wife of Abraham, and mystical Sarah, the spouse of Christ the church of God, stands in this: that as she not by power in herself, but by God's power and faith in His promise, bare Isaac; so the church our mother bringeth forth children to God, only by the power of God's Word and Spirit. And therefore as Isaac is called the child of promise, and said to be born by promise (Gal. 4:23), so men regenerate and born to the church are said not to be born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:13). And St James saith (Jam. 1:18); God of His own will begat us with the word of truth. Thus the Word of God and the will, that is, the Spirit of God, these two together beget children to the church.

The use is to teach us all to honour the church as our mother; but to worship God alone, who is the father of our soul. The church cannot make herself our mother, nor us her children, when she will; but it is God that must speak the word, and then we are made; He must beget us by the power of His Spirit and ministry of His Word. And further,

let us learn here what account we are to make of God's holy Word, which is the immortal seed of our regeneration, whereby we are made God's children and heirs of immortality.

Thus much of the two first effects of our faith.

3. The third is laid down in the next verse; which because it is much stood upon by the Holy Ghost, we will put it off till then, being therefore worthy of our deeper consideration.

V. And now followeth in the end of this verse, the fifth and last point, which is the ground of her faith:

Because she judged Him faithful which had promised.

The foundation whereon she built this her faith, that she should have a son, being barren and past age, was not the bare promise of God, so much as the conceit or opinion she had of Him that promised. For promises are not of value so much by the things promised, though never so great or excellent (for they may promise much, who can perform nothing; or though they can, yet will recall their word lightness and inconstancy), as by the worthiness of the party promising. We say in this world, we had rather had some man's word than other men's bond; and rather have a little promised of some, than much of others. Now, such was the judgment that Sarah held of Him that promised; namely, God: She judged Him faithful which had promised.

Faithful: That is, she judged Him able and willing to accomplish whatever He promised to her. So that the grounds of our faith in God and all His promises, must be a sure apprehension and knowledge of these two things in God:

1. His ability to make good whatever passeth Him in word.
2. His carefulness to do it when He hath said it.

Some will promise anything though their abilities stretch not to perform; others are able enough, but have no care of their word. But both these are in God; all-sufficient ability and most careful willingness. So Sarah judged of God and therefore she believed against reason; and so must we do, if we will believe God's Word aright. We may read and hear, and know God's Word, and have the points therein swimming in our heads; but if we will constantly believe with our hearts His blessed promises, and in our consciences fear His threatenings, we must be fully persuaded of these two to be in Him.

So are we taught by Christ (the wisdom of God) in the Lord's Prayer (before we pray for anything), to be resolved of God's power and will to hear and help us. He is Our Father, therefore careful and willing; He is in heaven, and therefore able to hear us and to give us all things (Matt. 6:9).

And the same commendation here given to Sarah is also given to Abraham (Rom. 4:20,21). He doubted not, but believed above hope....being fully assured that He which had promised was also able to do it.

The use hereof unto us is double:

1. First, to advise and guide us for our promises; not to be too reckless, as some are, what we promise; but to consider beforehand, and if it be beyond our power, not to speak the word (for Christian men's words must not be in vain); and if we have promised anything lawful and in our power, to be careful to perform it. Thus to do is to

be a faithful man, and is a good sign of an holy man, and God's child; provided this be so, first of all towards God, that we make conscience of performing the great vow we made in our baptism, and all other serious and holy purposes of heart made to God. For otherwise, he that breaks his vow to God carelessly, by living profanely, he may in worldly policy keep his word, but he cannot do it in conscience.

The church of Rome is foully faulty in this point, making no conscience of breaking promise and faith with us, or any of our religion; their nakedness herein is discovered in the face of all Christendom; let them that are wise be warned of it. They make great ostentation of their vows, and of their care to perform them above any other religion; but it appears hereby to be vile hypocrisy. For if they were conscionably, and not politically and formally, careful of their vows of chastity, poverty, and others made to God, they could not but be likewise careful of their promises made to men; for the one of these is the fountain and root of the other. But the neglect of the one, sheweth the formality and hypocrisy of the other.

Let all that fear God learn to make conscience of both these in their religion and service of God, and in all their dealings with men in the world; that so the world may judge us faithful men who have promised.

2. Secondly, let us here learn how to help and strengthen our weak faith in the great promises of God. We have a promise of salvation, Whosoever believeth in Christ, shall not perish, but have life everlasting (John 3:16). Of our resurrection, They that sleep in the dust shall rise again (Dan. 12:2). The Lord Jesus shall change our vile bodies, and make them like to his own glorious body (Phil. 3:21). Of a new world, We look for new heavens and a new earth, according to His promise (2 Pet. 3:13).

These be, as St Peter calls them, great and precious promises (2 Pet. 1:4). And surely it must be a great and precious faith that can constantly believe these. No better helps of our faith can there be, than often and seriously to consider of the mercy and power of Him that made them; if He be willing and able, what can let the performance of them? Let us therefore often say with holy Paul, Faithful is He which hath promised, who will also do it (1 Thess. 5:24); and with Sarah here, We judge Him faithful which hath promised.

Now followeth the last effect in the next verse:

“Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.” Hebrews 11:12.

The third and last effect of Sarah’s faith is that by this son Isaac, whom she conceived and brought forth by faith, she had a wonderful great issue, and a posterity almost without number. This effect consists not of itself, but depends upon the former. Her faith gave her strength to conceive Isaac, though she were barren, and to bring him forth, though she were old and weak; and so her faith brought him out, by whom she was made the mother of many millions of men.

The matter of this third effect is the multitude of men that came of Abraham and Sarah by Isaac.

This posterity or multitude is described by two arguments:

I. By the beginning or root of it: One that was as dead.

II. The quantity of greatness laid down:

1. Generally, to be a multitude and innumerable.

2. Particularly, by two comparisons:

(1). As many as the stars in the sky.

(2). As the sands by the sea shore.

I. The first point is the root and beginning of this multitude in these words::

And therefore sprang there of one, even one that was as dead.

One, that is one woman, Sarah; or at the most, one couple, Abraham and Sarah. And this one was no better than dead. Not dead properly and fully; for none are so dead whose souls and bodies are not separate; but, as dead, that is, as good as dead, or half dead; meaning that they were altogether unfit for generation of children, the strength of nature being decayed in them; Abraham being an hundred, and Sarah ninety years old. And if this be true of Abraham, who was past age; how much more is it of Sarah, who was both past age, and was also barren in her best age.

Here we are to note and learn many things:

1.

First, multitudes came of one. See here the powerful, and yet the ordinary works of God, to rear up good and huge buildings upon small and weak foundations. So did He in the beginning, and ever since. Indeed He made at the first thousands of stars, because they must be no more than at the first they were; and millions of angels, intending they shall not multiply; He could also have made millions of men in a moment. He would not, but only one couple, Adam and Eve. And of them came the infinite race of mankind. When sin had made an end of that world, he founded not the second that yet continueth upon a thousand couples; but by three men and their wives he multiplied the whole race of mankind, which since have grown from three to millions of millions. And so here of one old man, and a barren old woman, spring innumerable multitudes.

This God doth to magnify His own power in the eyes of the sons of men; and so He did also in matters heavenly. The number of Christians since Christ, that have grown to millions, began in a poor

number at the first. For when Christ Himself was ascended, the number of known believers was 120 (Acts 1:15).

The consideration hereof should teach us all these duties:

(1). First, not to measure God by our lengths, nor to tie Him to our rules; but to esteem of His power and might, as we see it deserves; and to entertain high and honourable thoughts of Him and His majesty, who can rear up so great works upon so poor foundations.

(2). Secondly, not to despair of ourselves or our estates, though we think ourselves never so weak, so poor, so sick, either in soul or body; but to remember Him that of one made multitudes to spring out. Therefore when thou art brought never so low, either in soul or body, by any miseries, either inward or outward; faint not, but go forward in the strength of the Lord thy God. Particularly, if God have afflicted thee with poverty that thou have nothing to begin withal; or for thy soul; is thy knowledge in religion small, thy means poor, thy feeling of God's favour but weak? Yet faint not, but lay fast hold on God's power and promise, use carefully the holy means God hath ordained, remembering and relying on Him who made millions grow out of one; and assure thyself, as Job saith, Though thy beginnings be small, yet thy latter ends shall greatly increase (Job 8:7).

2. Secondly, observe here how old persons are called half dead, or as good as dead; and that is true of them many ways:

(1). First, their years and days limited them, are as good as gone. For suppose a man should be as sure to live 100 years, as the sun is to run all the day long his course, and at night to go down; yet as when the sun is past the height, and drawing downward, we say it goeth fast down, and the day hasteth away; so when a man is past his middle age, when the sun of his life is past the noontide, he declineth

daily, and draweth fast away, and the night of his life approacheth with haste and much horror, unless he prevent it.

(2). Secondly, their strength and vital powers, by which their life is continued and their souls and bodies kept together, are so much weakened, that they are almost extinguished; whereby it comes to pass, an old man may feel a manifest defect in all powers of mind and body.

(3). Thirdly, sickness or diseases grow upon old age; and as their strength faileth, so the force of diseases is redoubled on them; and look what diseases have lurked in their bodies which either naturally were bred in them, or accidentally taken, they now shew themselves more sensibly; and the weaker a man is, the stronger is his sickness. In these three respects an old man or woman is as good as dead.

The use hereof is profitable:

(1). First, they must therefore be advised to prepare themselves for death. Every man is to prepare, I confess; then if every man, especially they that be old. The young man may die, the old man must die; the youngest cannot live always, the old man cannot live long; the aged man's grave is as it were made already, and his one foot is in it. And this is not man's conceit alone, but God's own judgment, who as we see here, calls an old man as good as dead; and that not so much in regard that he is sure to die, as that he is near it. Therefore as every man young or old is to make ready, because his time is unknown, and no man is sure that he shall live to be old; and as the psalmist singeth, Every man in his best state is altogether vanity (Psa. 39:5); so especially he to whom God hath been so gracious as to let him see old age, he should think of nothing but his end, and prepare every day to die in the Lord. His grey hairs, his wrinkled skin, his withered face, his ill stomach, his weak memory,

his crooked body, and the manifest and most sensible alteration and decay of his whole state of mind and body, should hourly all cry in his ears: I am half dead, I will therefore prepare to die in the Lord.

It is therefore a miserable sight to see that those, who of all men should be most willing to die, are for the most part most desirous to live. And those who should be most ready to die are generally most ignorant, most covetous, and their hearts most of all wedded to the earth and earthly things.

(2). Secondly, old persons must here learn St Paul's lesson (2 Cor. 4:16), that as the outward man perisheth, so the inward man may be renewed daily. The outward man is the body, the inward man is the soul and the grace of God in it. They must therefore labour, that as the strength of their bodies decay, so the grace of God in their souls may quicken and revive. But alas, the common practice is contrary. For old men have generally so misspent their youth, and in their old age are partly so backward, partly so unfit to learn religion, that when they come to their death beds, they are then to be catechised in the very principles of religion; so that when the body is half dead, religion hath no being in them; and when the body is dying, religion and grace scarce begin to live in them; such men cast all upon a desperate point. But let them that desire a joyful departure, think of these things beforehand; and as years draw on, and so draw life to his end, and the body to the grave; so let them wean their hearts from the world, and lift them up to God, and so spend their last days in getting knowledge and in serving God; that when their bodies are weakest and fittest for the earth, their souls may be the holiest and the ripest for heaven. To such men shall it never be discomfort to see their bodies half dead, when for recompense thereof they find their souls half in heaven. Thus we see the root or foundation of this

posterity, how poor and weak it was. Now let us come to the greatness of it.

II.

Thereof sprang as many in number c.

1. This one old couple, Abraham and Sarah, are made by God's power the father and mother of many nations; and he and she, of whom the world would have pronounced that they should not have left a name upon the earth, have now millions of children that sprang out of them. Here we may learn that though God work ordinarily, according to the course of nature, which Himself hath established; yet that He is not bound to it, nor will be; He bound it, therefore there is no reason it should bind Him. Here we may see the power and prerogative of God's majesty.

As in the beginning He made to be, those things which were not; so still He calleth things that are not as though they were (Rom. 4:17), and turneth and altereth the state and nature of His creatures as pleaseth Him. He can take life from the living man, and leave him dead; He can give life to the dead man, and make him live again. So hath He dealt for the body, and for the soul He hath been no less wonderful.

Saul, of a bloody persecutor, He can make a zealous preacher (Acts 9), even a glorious instrument and a chosen vessel to carry His name unto the Gentiles (v.15), even he who thought to have blotted out the name of Christ, and all that called on that name from under heaven (v.14).

Rahab, an harlot and a common woman, yet by God's work so far altered that her faith is registered in v.31 of this chapter as amongst

the most excellent believers that have been in the world. Let this teach us, when we see our own sins, how hideous and monstrous they be, yet not to despair. And when we see other men live in extreme dissoluteness, yet not to judge of them before the time; but even then, with hope and comfort, remember that God quickeneth the dead, and calleth things that are not as though they were (Rom. 4:17).

And in that hope, let us persuade ourselves that He may quicken our dead hearts, and revive us by His grace. And therefore in that hope, let us raise up ourselves to use all holy means of God's word, sacraments and prayer; which if we carefully and continually do, we shall see wonders wrought in us; that as they said of Paul, This man preacheth the faith which before he destroyed, and therefore glorified God for him (Gal. 1:23,24); so shall men say of us, This man hates the profaneness that he lived in, and loves the religion that before he mocked. Such miracles will the Lord work in us, if with faith and diligence we use the holy means; that so all that see us shall glorify God for me.

Thus we see generally how great the issue and posterity of Sarah was.

2. But it is more particularly enlarged by two comparisons:

As many as the stars in the sky, or the sands by the sea shore, which are innumerable.

His comparisons are two: One taken from the heavens, as many as the stars in the sky; the other from the earth, as the sands in the sea. And these two are used by the Holy Ghost, being things of incredible number, to express the multitude of the Israelites that came all from Sarah.

Not but that other things also are of as great number; as the drops of water, dust of the earth, and hairs of men's heads, c., but these two are most common and proverbial phrases whereby to express a multitude. And again, the stars of the sky are rather named than any other, because God in the beginning pleased to use it to Abraham, when he had never a child (Gen. 15:5). God carried Abraham forth in the night, and bade him count the stars if he could, and said, so shall thy seed be. And Moses afterwards useth the same comparison (Deut. 10:22), Our fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the Lord hath made us as the stars of the sky in multitude.

Now, because all men are not astronomers, as Abraham and Moses were, and that ignorant men might say that they can perceive no such matter in the stars; therefore he useth another comparison, which every countryman may discern how innumerable they be; namely, the sands of the sea shore. And lest any should say, I dwell in the midland country, and never saw the sea sand, and am ignorant and so cannot judge of the stars, therefore to put him out of doubt, the Holy Ghost assures him in the end of the verse that they are both innumerable; that is, not in themselves, or to God; but in regard of man, and man's skill, they are unable to be counted.

(1). Concerning these two comparisons, let us observe the manner or the phrase of speech in them used:

(i) For the first, we are to know that the speech is not proper, but figurative. For properly, they were not as many as the stars, or as the sands; neither are the stars or sands innumerable; but it is a figure called by the rhetoricians a hyperbole. which is an excess of fineness of speech, or an excessive elegancy. And as it is ordinary in all writers, and even in common speech; so it is not refused by the Holy Ghost, but used both here and in the two forenamed places; and the

like also of the same nature (but in other phrases) in other places; as St John (John 21:25), I suppose, saith he, that if all the sayings and doings of Christ were written, the world could not contain the books that would be written. Meaning that there would be exceeding many, and more than would be needful for salvation. And (Deut. 9:1), Moses saith that the cities of the Canaanites were great, and walled up to heaven. Meaning that they were very high, and so high as was possible for city walls to be, and as was impossible to have been sealed in all men's reasons, had not God fought for them.

These and such like are common in the Scripture; and seeing we allow that liberty to all writers, and to ourselves in common speech; we have no reason to deny it to the Scripture, which was written for all men's understanding, and therefore in such phrases as are usual and ordinary with all men.

(ii) And the like liberty is here taken also in another figure; as many as the sands by the shore of the sea; the word properly signifieth and soundeth the lip of the sea. No the sea hath no lip, but it is a speech taken or borrowed from man or beast who have lips, and the seas shore resembleth a lip. For look what a lip is to them, the shores are to the sea; as the two lips enclose the mouth, so the two shores on both sides do enclose the sea, which lieth as in a mouth between them.

From hence we may learn profitable instructions:

(i) First, that therefore rhetoric is a warrantable, good and lawful art; and it ariseth thus: That which the Holy Ghost practiseth must needs be not only not evil, but good and warrantable. But the Holy Ghost useth and practiseth rhetoric, here and in many other places else of the Scripture; Therefore it is a good and lawful art. The proposition is undoubted, the assumption is clear by both these places, and almost

the whole body of the Scripture; many of St Paul's epistles, many of Christ's own sermons, St John's gospel, many of the prophets, especially Isaiah, have as much and as elegant rhetoric in them as any writers in the world; and besides all other virtue and divine power in them, do even for figures and ornaments of art match any orators that have written in the Greek or Latin. Nor would it be any hard task to undertake to prove and illustrate every approved rule of rhetoric out of some part of Scripture. Now if it be lawful to practice the rules of rhetoric, then it is lawful also to collect those rules together, to pen them, and to make an art of them. They therefore that holding the contrary, do say or teach or write that it is unlawful, go against the stream and common practice of the Scripture, and rules of common reason.

(ii) Secondly, here it is apparent that in preaching God's word, it is lawful and warrantable for a minister to use rhetoric and eloquence. And the reason is good: for that which the Holy Ghost useth in penning of the Scripture, the same may God's ministers use also in preaching the same. They therefore that deny that liberty to ministers, are too rough and rugged, and pull out of the hand of the ministers one of his weapons, and out of the wings of the Scripture one of her feathers.

Yet we must know that all or any kind of eloquence is not permitted to a Christian minister; for St Paul saith (1 Cor. 2:13), We speak the words of God, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things. So that there is an holy, a sanctified, a spiritual eloquence, an eloquence fit for spiritual things, and that eloquence must be used. As the Israelites might marry the Midianite women whom they had taken in a war, but not till they had purified them (Num. 31:18,19), And more plainly and particularly (Deut. 21:11-13),

Moses explaineth what that purifying is: And thou shalt bring her home into thine house, and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails, and put off the garment she was taken in, and then thou mayest marry her. So, human eloquence must be brought home to divinity, and be pared and shaved with spiritual wisdom, and then may lawfully and profitably be used.

For our more special direction herein, these cautions may be observed:

(a) First, the more natural it is, and the less affected, the more commendable it is in the doer, and more profitable to the hearer.

(b) Secondly, it must be grave, sober, and modest; remembering the height and holiness of the place a man stands in, and of the work he doeth. Therefore it must not consist in telling strange tales, or using such gestures or words, manner or matter as may move laughing and smiling in the auditors. There may be wit in such doing; but it can hardly be the sanctified and spiritual eloquence which St Paul there speaks of.

(c) Thirdly, it must be such as may be an help, and not an hindrance to the understanding of God's Word; for it is a damsel to divinity, but not her mistress. God's Word therefore must not bow and bend to her; much less be wrung and wrested to her, but she to God's Word.

It must in a word be such as may most lively, purely, plainly, and significantly express the meaning of God's Word. Therefore a man must endeavour that all his speech be in one language, at least, in such as his hearers understand; for else if he speak the body of his speech in one, and peck out the members in another which the people understand not; he may indeed in his own spirit speak mysteries, but to the hearer he speaketh parables (1 Cor. 14:2). And

to his own understanding he may preach well, but the hearer is not edified (1 Cor 14:17). Therefore let not eloquence be an hindrance to the understanding of the hearers, which God hath ordained to be an help and furtherance. And with these or such like qualifications, eloquence may be used with good warrant and much profit. And for cautions and qualifications herein, hardly can any man set down better rules than every man's conscience will unto himself.

(iii) Thirdly, in as much as the Holy Ghost here and elsewhere useth so much rhetoric, divines may learn where the fountain of Christian eloquence is, namely, in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Which being compiled by the wisdom of God, we are to assure ourselves they contain in them true wisdom of all sorts. Precepts of rhetoric, I confess, are to be learned out of other books, which purposely do teach them; but the practice of those rules in examples, can be nowhere better than in Moses, and the prophets, and the evangelists. And this must needs follow upon that that hath already been granted. For if we yield that rhetoric is good and lawful, and practised in the Scripture; then it must needs follow that it is there practised in the best manner; for shall the divinity there taught be the soundest? The history reported there the truest? The conclusions of philosophy, astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, cosmography and physic there delivered the finest? The music there practised the exactest? The logic there practised the sharpest? The laws there enacted the justest? And shall not the rhetoric there practised be the purest? Surely, if Moses had written a book of his own, as he was a mere man, and as he was Moses brought up in Egypt; or Paul written a book as he was a Pharisee and doctor of the law; they would have been full of all excellent learning; for Paul was brought up at the foot of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3); and Moses was exceeding learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, and mighty in word and deed (Acts 7:22). Shall they then be the secretaries of the

most High God, the fountain of wisdom and learning; and shall not their books be filled with the most excellent learning in all kinds? Doubtless, whoever searcheth it, shall find it to be so.

Seeing therefore that eloquence is lawful, and that preachers may lawfully use it; let them also know where to have it; let them study God's books, and there shall they find not only divinity, but knowledge and learning of all sorts, and that most exquisite; and as excellent patterns and precedents of eloquence, as are to be found in any authors in the world. And let them, if they would preach with spiritual power and eloquence; look how Moses, the prophets, our Saviour Christ, and His apostles preached; for to follow them is the true way.

Thus we see the manner here used by the Holy Ghost in these two comparisons, to describe the greatness of this her posterity.

(2). Now the matter in them contained is, that here is the performance of one of the greatest promises made to Abraham. The promise is (Gen. 22:17), I will surely bless thee, and greatly multiply thy seed, as the stars in the heaven, and as the sands by the sea shore. There is the promise; and behold here the performance in the very same words, and that most true and effectual; for, at the time when the Holy Ghost wrote these words, the Israelites were multiplied to many millions; yea, to a number past number.

So that here we learn that God is true in all His promises, be they never so great and wonderful. If He speak the word, if the promise pass Him, it is sure; heaven and earth shall rather pass away, than any one piece of His promise shall fail.

The use is to teach us:

(i) First, to believe God when He promiseth, whatever it be; for He is worthy to be believed, who never failed to perform what He promised. He promised these millions to Abraham, when he had but one child; nay, when he had never a one (Gen. 15:8), and Abraham believed. Such a faith was excellent indeed, and deserves eternal commendation (as here it hath). Let us be children of this faithful Abraham, and the rather, seeing we see the performance which he saw not. We think it a disgrace if we be not believed; especially if we do use to keep our word. Let us then know thereby, what dishonour it is to the Lord not to believe Him, who never failed in the performance to any creature.

(ii) Secondly, we must here learn of God to be true and faithful in our words and promises. God spake plainly, and deceived not Abraham; and after at the time performed it; so must we deal plainly and simply in our words and bargains, and think that to deceive and overreach by crafty words and double meanings and equivocal phrases are not becoming Christianity. And we must make conscience of a lie, else we are like the devil and not God. Also a Christian man must take heed what, how and to whom he promiseth; but having promised, he must perform, though it be loss or harm to himself; if it be not wrong to God, or to the church or state. Wrong to himself must not hinder him from performance. Christian men's words must not be vain, they should be as good as bonds, though I know it is lawful, and very convenient in regard of mortality to take such kinds of assurances.

(iii) Lastly, Abraham had the promise that his seed should be so (Gen. 15:8), and here we see it is so, but he himself saw it not; so that Abraham had the promise, and we the performance. So Adam had the promise of the Messiah, but we see it performed; the patriarchs

and prophets had the promise of the calling of the Gentiles, but we see it performed.

See here the glory of the church under the New Testament above the Old. This must teach us to be so much better than they, as God is better to us than He was to them; and to excel them in faith and all other virtues of holiness; or else their faith and their holy obedience shall turn to our greater condemnation, which have had so far greater cause to believe and obey God, and so far better means than they. Which if it be so, then alas, what will become of them who come behind them, nay, have no care to follow them in their faith, nor holiness, nor any duties of holy obedience.

Thus much for the example of this holy woman's faith, and of the commendation thereof.

Now before He come to any more particular examples of faith, the Holy Ghost gives a general commendation of the faith of all those jointly which are spoken of already.

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” Hebrews 11:13.

Hitherto, the Holy Ghost hath particularly commended the faith of divers holy believers. Now from this verse to the seventeenth, he doth generally commend the faith of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob together; yet not so much their faith, as the endurance and constancy of their faith. Particularly the points are two:

I. Is laid down their constancy and continuance: All these died in faith.

II. That constancy is set forth by four effects:

1. They received not the promises, but saw them afar off.
2. They believed them.
3. They received them thankfully.
4. They professed themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

I. The first point touching these believers is that as they begun, so they held on; as they lived, so they died in faith.

All these died in faith.

The truth of the matter in these words, may be referred to all aforegoing, saving Enoch who died not; yet he continued also

constant in his faith, and in that faith was taken up; but as for Abel and Noah, they died in faith. Yet I take it, that principally and directly, the Holy Ghost intended no more than these four I named; and my reason is, because the particular effects in this verse, and the points where this their constancy is amplified in the three verses following, do all agree, especially with these four; and not so properly with Abel or Noah; so that I take that He meaneth by all these, all these men that lived in the second world since the flood. All these died in faith; that is, in assurance that the promises made unto them should be performed in God's good time.

These promises were principally these two:

1. Salvation by the Messiah.
2. The possession of the land of Canaan.

In this faith they died; that is, they held it (through all assaults and temptations to the contrary) even to the last gasp, and died therein.

1. In this their practice is commended unto us a most worthy lesson of Christianity; namely, that we must so live that we may die in faith. Many say they live in faith; and it is well if they do so; but the main point is, to die in faith. There is none so ill, but however he lives, yet he would die well; if he would die well, he must die in faith. For miserable is the death that is without faith. And herein faith and hope differ from other graces of God; love, joy, zeal, holiness, and all other graces are imperfect here, and are perfected in heaven; but faith and hope are perfected at our deaths; they are not in the other world, for there is nothing then to be believed nor hoped for, seeing we do then enjoy all things; but as they are begun in our life, at our regeneration, so they be made perfect when we die; and they shine most gloriously in the last and greatest combat of all, which is at the

hour of death. So that the death of a Christian, which is the gate to glory, is to die in faith.

Besides, as life leaves us, so death finds us; and as death leaves us, so the last judgment finds us; and as it leaves us, so we continue for ever and ever without recovery of alteration.

Now to die in faith is to die in an assured estate of glory and happiness, which is that that every man desireth; therefore as we all desire it, so let us die in faith, and we shall attain unto it.

St Paul tells us (1 Cor. 15:55), death is a terrible serpent, for he hath a poisoned sting. Now when we die, we are to encounter with this hideous and fearful serpent. He is fearful every way, but specially for his sting; that sting is our sin; and this sting is not taken away, nor the force of it quenched, but by true faith, which quencheth all the fiery darts of the devil (Eph. 6:16). If therefore we would be able to encounter with this great enemy (in the conquering of whom stands our happiness; and by whom to be conquered is our eternal misery), we must then so arm ourselves with faith, that we may die in faith; for he that dieth in faith, that faith of his kills his sins and conquers death; but he that dieth without faith, death and sin seize on him, and his sins live for ever, and his misery by them.

Now, if we would die in faith, we must live in faith; else it is not to be expected; for, so these holy patriarchs lived long in this faith wherein they died. For their holy lives shewed plainly that they lived in that faith which the apostle saith doth purify our hearts (Acts 15:9). Now if we would live in true faith, the means to attain it set down by God's Word are these:

(1) First, we must labour to get knowledge of the fundamental points of religion; of God, of the creation, the fall, the immortality of the

soul, the two covenants, of works by the law, of grace by the Mediator; and such other substantial points touching God, His word, sacraments, law, gospel, prayer, good works etc. as the Scriptures, and the creeds and catechisms out of the Scriptures, do yield unto us. Herein the case of the common people of all nations is miserable. In popery, their clergy is so fat and full, that they will not; in our churches the ministry (a great part of it) so poor and ill provided for, they cannot teach. Between both, the people of the world do perish for lack of knowledge; for how can they but perish that die not in faith? How can they die so, that live not in faith? And how can they ever have faith that have no knowledge, seeing knowledge is the foundation of faith? Therefore it needs the help of those that may, and the prayers of all, that our church may have teachers, and our people catechisers; for without learning the catechism, it is impossible to learn religion.

(2) Secondly, when we have got knowledge, and so laid the foundation; then must we learn the promises of God for salvation, and we must hide them in our hearts, as the jewels of life, of salvation. We must believe them to be true and effectual to all that will take hold of them; and we ourselves must therefore take hold of them, and apply them to our souls.

(3) Thirdly, after both these, we must conform ourselves throughout (heart and life) unto the holy laws of God; we must leave all bad ways and ungodly courses, though they be never so dear unto us, or so common in the world; and must make conscience of all sin, and endeavour to do all duties to God and man.

The first of these is the ground of faith; the second is faith itself; the last is the fruit and effect of it, and an assured testimony of it to God, to His church, and to a man's own conscience. And to do these three

things is to walk in the old and holy way, consecrated by Christ's blood, and trodden in by all the holy fathers; and popery, nor any other religion, can appoint so safe, so sure, nor so direct a way. This lived Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, and after this course they died in faith, and now live in glory; and so shall we with them, if we will live in faith as they did; but else we may long look for heaven before we come there. Indeed God can make a man that lived not in faith, die in faith; but the matter is not what He can do, but what is His ordinary course, and that is this: They that live in faith, die in faith. Therefore let us take the ordinary course, and repent, and turn betimes, and live the life of faith; and leave the late repentance to them that think it but a sport to venture a soul; that course may speed, but this course is sure to speed; he that lives in sin, may hope to die in faith; but he that lives in faith, is sure to die in faith, and to live in glory for ever.

2. Secondly, observe how it is said, All these died in faith; not some, but all. Abraham the father, and the root, and with him the wife, the child and the grandchild; behold a true noble blood, a holy kindred, a blessed generation; worthy is Abraham of all the honour he hath, who was the root of such a noble and blessed brood. And worthy are Isaac and Jacob of so good a father, who stained not their blood by forsaking their faith; but held it as they received it, and lived and died in it. Let this teach us:

(1) First, if we be fathers, to shine before our children in a holy religion, true faith, and good life; and it is great hope that our wives and children will follow us in the same.

(2) Secondly, if we be sons, to look which of our forefathers and ancestors embraced the most holy religion; and to choose, and live, and die in their faith. Most of our young papists can say no more for

their religion but this: My father and grandfather were of that religion. But they must look all to their forefathers; Isaac and Jacob would not be of their great grandfather's (Nahor's or Terah's) religion, but of their father Abraham; and Abraham himself would not be of his father Terah's, or his grandfather Nahor's religion; but he went up a great deal higher, to his forefathers to the tenth generation Noah, and Shem, and embraced their religion. So that we see, it is nothing to say, I am of my father's, or grandfather's religion; unless first I prove that theirs was of God; and then he is a noble Christian man, which knowing that, will not forsake it, but will live and die in it.

(3) Thirdly, see here true honour and gentry is to live and die in the true faith and holy religion of our ancestors; here is the fountain of honour, to do as these did. Abraham perceives he is wrong, and erred with his fathers; he therefore leaves his father's and grandfather's religion, and goeth up higher, and takes a better. Isaac his son makes himself heir, not of his land alone, but of his father's religion also; Jacob the grandchild followeth both, and dieth in faith with them. Behold here Jacob, a true gentleman in blood, his holiness and religion is in the third descent. Let us all learn to adorn our gentility and nobility with these ensigns of true honour.

And let all them that shame to stain their blood by treasons, or misdemeanours; shame also, to let their forefather's religion, holiness or virtues fail in them; but let them all so live in them, that with Jacob they may die in their father's faith.

3. Lastly, observe how it is said, they died in faith; they before lived in it; but now their principal commendation is that they died in it.

Let us learn here to hold on in a good course when we have entered into it; for constancy and continuance is the true commendation; he

that dieth in faith, is he that receives the crown. To this end, let us stir up ourselves with the apostle's exhortation (Gal. 6:9), Let us not be weary of well-doing, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not.

And further, let this teach us all to choose that faith to live in (with these holy patriarchs) that we may boldly die in. It is a true observation that popery is a good religion to live in, but ours to die in. The papists usurp this saying, and turn in the contrary way; but they have as much right to it, as the thief to the true man's purse. The liberty, the pardons, dispensations, sanctuary, the pomp and outward glory of their church; and their fasting and outward austerities, being foul and feigned hypocrisies, and indeed open licentiousness; these and many things more, may allure any natural man in the world to live in their religion; but when they come to die, then they all know, and some confess, it is surest and safest to die in our religion. Let us therefore cheerfully and comfortably live in that religion and faith wherein we may so boldly die, that even our adversaries confess it to be safest.

II. Now follow the four effects and fruits of their faith:

1. The first is this: that

They received not the promises, but saw them afar off.

By promises we understand, first, the promises of the land of Canaan. Secondly, the spiritual promises of the kingdom of Christ. These they did not receive; that is, fully; though in part they did; for true faith doth always receive, apprehend, and apply unto itself truly, though not fully, the thing promised. God said, He would give them the land of Canaan; but they did not fully enjoy and possess it. So likewise, the Messiah was promised unto them, but they never saw

His coming in the flesh, and yet they believed God's promise, and died in that faith.

Where we may see the invincible force of their faith that cleaved fast unto the promise of God, even unto death; though they never enjoyed the things promised in this life; which plainly condemns our age of unbelief, for we have more accomplished unto us than ever they had. Abraham never saw Christ, but afar off; yet we have Him exhibited in the flesh; we see and know He lived and died, rose again, and ascended, and now makes continual intercession for us; and we have the true sacraments, which shall last for ever pledges of Him, and of life everlasting by Him. And for temporal promises, we have far more accomplished unto us than ever we had. But though we go before Abraham in the fruition of God's promises, yet we come far behind him in belief; for faith worketh by love, and love is seen in true obedience; but generally, this is too true, men make no conscience of obedience; which sheweth undoubtedly that there is little sound faith in us. And it may be feared that these notable men, Abraham. Isaac and Jacob, shall stand in judgment against us to our further condemnation; for they never received the accomplishment of God's promises, and yet they believed; but we do see the same fulfilled and exhibited unto us, and yet we will not believe.

But saw them afar off.

Here is the property of their faith, and the power of it. The promises were afar off, and yet they saw them. The phrase here used is borrowed from mariners; who being far on the sea, cannot discern towns and coasts afar off, but only by help of some tower or high place, which their eye will sooner discern, although it be afar off. And so Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, being long before the day of Christ's incarnation, could not otherwise see Christ, but afar off, by the eye of

faith in the promises of the Messiah; for this is the property of faith, to make a thing absent to be present, after a sort; Faith being the ground of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen (v.1).

Hence we may learn a difference between the church in the Old Testament and that in the New. We in the New Testament have greater measure of knowledge, more lively discerning of the Messiah, and a clearer light of understanding in the mystery of or salvation by Christ, than the church had under the Old Testament; howsoever they excelled in faith, yet in the knowledge and discerning of Christ they were inferior unto us. And therefore the Lord made this promise to the time of the gospel long before; that then the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters that cover the sea (Isa. 11:9). And St Paul proves this performed, when he affirmeth of the church of the New Testament (2 Cor. 3:18), But all we as in a mirror behold the glory of the Lord with open face. And Christ (John 6:45), They shall be all taught of God.

If this be true, that knowledge should so abound in the time of the gospel; then all ignorant persons of this latter age of the world must know that they have much to answer for at the last day of judgment; for God in the New Testament hath made His church to abound in knowledge, so that their ignorance (for which they think God will hold them excused) shall be a bill of indictment against them at the last day, to their further condemnation; because the light of the gospel is so clearly and plentifully revealed in these days, that whereas the most excellent patriarchs of all could then but see Christ afar off, the most simple may now see Him near unto them.

Again, where there is more knowledge, there should be more obedience; therefore it concerneth all those that profess themselves to be Christians, and submit themselves to hear and learn the word

of God taught unto them, not to content themselves with bare knowledge, though it be never so much; but withal, to bring forth the fruits of obedience in their lives and conversations. For though Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in regard of faith did go far before us; yet seeing we have more knowledge than they had in the Messiah, we must labour to become like unto them in the obedience of our lives; their faith was stronger than ours, but our obedience should be greater than theirs, because we have more cause to believe than they. St Paul saith, We all behold as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord with open face. And the end thereof is this, that we may be transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18). So that the more knowledge we have, the more sanctification we ought to have, and the more hatred of sin, and more obedience to God's commandments. But, the more is the pity, the case goeth far otherwise with the world; for even many among us that are no students by profession, have great and commendable knowledge in religion. But where is the fruit hereof in holy obedience to the laws of God? God by calling hath made us a pleasant vine, but the sour grapes of sin are our ordinary fruit, they be the grapes of gall (as Moses saith (Deut. 32;32)). For atheism, blasphemy, contempt of God's Word and worship, with open profaning of God's Sabbath, do everywhere abound; to omit the heinous crimes against the second table, as oppression, adultery and blood touching blood; for all which we may justly fear that the Lord will either remove His candlestick from us, and so of a church and people of God make us no church; or else sweep us away by some fearful judgment, as with the besom of destruction, because we hold the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). For better it were not to have known the way of righteousness, than to turn from the holy commandment given unto us. Let us therefore join with our knowledge, obedience, that so we may shew forth our faith in doing our duties of piety unto God, and of brotherly

love and Christianity unto our brethren. Thus much of the first fruit of their faith.

2. The second fruit of their faith is noted in these words:

And believed them.

Where by believing, we must understand not so much the act of faith, for that was noted before, as the growth and increase of their faith; for the word imports a confirmation of their hearts, and a resolution in assurance of the promises made unto them; which is not unusual in scripture, for Paul prayeth for the churches who had true knowledge, faith and love, that they might increase and abound therein more and more (Eph. 3:16,17; Phil. 1:9,11; Col. 1:9,11).

Here then we may observe in the example of these patriarchs, that it is the duty and property of every true believer to go forward and increase in faith, till he come to a full persuasion and assurance in God's promises. All the gifts of God (and therefore faith) are the Lord's talents, and every true believer is the Lord's servant, called to occupy therewith. Now God, having put His talent into any man's hand, doth require the increase thereof, as the parable shews (Luke 19:13). And this Paul teacheth; for praying for the Ephesians that they may go on, and be strengthened by his Spirit in the inner man (Eph. 3:16), he signifieth that he that doth truly believe in Christ must go on from grace to grace, till he be a tall man in Christ; as a child groweth from year to year till he come to be a strong man. The nature of faith is like unto fire, which will not go out so long as wood or other fuel is put unto it, but will take hold thereof, and grow unto a greater flame; and so will faith grow up to a full persuasion in all those that conscionably apply themselves to the Word and prayer.

But goes the case thus with us in the matter of faith? Nay verily, generally it is far otherwise; for many among us have no regard of faith at all, but think they may live as they lust, their good meaning will serve the turn; others and those not a few, are so far from going forward in faith, that they are every day worse and worse, and still go backward more and more. A third sort we have that will hear the word and receive the sacraments; but yet their growing in grace is very slender, they stand at a stay, and profit little.

Now howsoever it may be thought but a small fault, not to profit in religion; yet undoubtedly it is a fearful judgment of God, when the hearers of the word in any congregation are daily taught, and do not profit thereby; and therefore the Holy Ghost noteth those women to be laden with sin, which are ever learning, and yet never are able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7). If a child lately born, like not well nor grow, when it hath good keeping; the common saying is that it is a changeling. So if a man hear the word of God, and does not increase in knowledge, faith and obedience, we may most truly say of him, that he is a spiritual changeling, and therefore that we may avoid the fearful judgment of God, we must labour for faith; and having gotten faith, increase therein, and in other graces of God, till we come to be strong men in Christ.

It is here said that those patriarchs increased in faith; but it may be demanded: How and by what means did they attain hereto? Answer: In the book of Genesis, we may find three ways whereby they were confirmed in the faith, and did grow up in grace.

(1) The first means was from God Himself; for, when He had made His covenant with Abraham, mercifully renewing the same during his life, as occasion served sundry times, He stayed not there, suffering it to die with Abraham; but when Abraham was dead, God

renewed His covenant with Isaac and Rebecca, and with Jacob also after them. Now the tongue of man cannot utter what a wonderful furtherance it was unto their faith, to have the Lord Himself to renew His gracious promises unto them.

(2) The second means of increasing their faith, was their holy conversing one with another; for the manner of the patriarchs was to teach and instruct their children, and to nurture them up in the true worship and fear of God, by which means they did not only implant God's promises in the hearts of their children, but were themselves confirmed in the same; for he that teacheth another from a feeling heart, greatly strengtheneth his own soul. Now God Himself doth testify this thing of Abraham, saying, I know him that he will command his sons, and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and judgment (Gen. 18:19). Now look what Abraham herein did to Isaac, that no doubt did Isaac unto Jacob.

(3) The third means to increase their faith was, from each one to himself; for they gave themselves oftentimes in their own persons to muse and meditate upon the promises of God; so it is said of Isaac, that he went out to pray or meditate in the field towards evening (Gen. 24:63); and we may persuade ourselves it was concerning this and other promises of God, and the accomplishment thereof. And we need not doubt but that Abraham and Jacob did the like.

These are the means by which these godly patriarchs were strengthened in their faith. All which must be marked of us diligently, and put in practice; for the reason why we hear the Word often and yet profit little by it, is chiefly this: because the means by which men should grow up in faith are so slenderly used amongst us. For the first means, which is on God's behalf to man; is through His

great and unspeakable mercy, plentifully afforded in many parts of the land in the holy ministry of the gospel; wherein God's gracious promises of mercy are opened and applied to men's hearts, and His judgment against sin sharply denounced, to drive men to lay hold on God's mercy in Christ. But if we regard the second means; which is mutual instruction from father to child, of master to servant, and of one neighbour to another; together with mutual conference about that we are taught; or else if we regard the third means, which is private meditation upon God's Word and promises taught unto us (which meditation is to a Christian soul like the chewing of the cud unto a beast, for as the chewing of the cud turns that which is eaten into true feeding, so doth holy meditation make God's words and promises spiritual refreshing, by digesting them in the heart); If, I say, we take a view of these two latter, we shall find them seldom used of very many or not at all. Blessed be God, we need not to doubt, but there be some who use these means with care and reverence; but alas, these some are very few. And because this duty is so slackly performed, hence it is, that though the covenant of mercy in Christ be oft repeated, yet men reap little profit by it. So that we must learn to follow this notable practice of these godly patriarchs, and look what means they used for the increase of their faith, the same also must we use, and that diligently; so shall we grow and increase and wax strong in faith, as they did.

3. The third fruit of their faith is this:

And received them thankfully.

The original Greek word doth signify to salute; and that not only by speech, but any way else, as by embracing c., and therefore in this place it is not unfitly translated, And received them thankfully; that is, they took them kindly at God's hands.

This is a notable fruit of faith, whereby they are commended; that seeing the promises of God afar off, did take them most kindly at God's hands. But here we must consider how they took them kindly; namely, by doing two things:

(1) First, by an action of their heart. Secondly, by an action of their life. The action of their heart was this: that howsoever the promise was not accomplished in their days, yet they were wonderfully glad thereof; for our Saviour Christ said to the Jews, Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad (John 8:56). It did Abraham's heart good to see Christ afar off; and so we may safely think of Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, and their hearts were also ravished with joy, to hear the wonderful promise of God concerning the Messiah; and to think of the most joyful performance which they knew should follow in due time.

(2) Secondly, they took this promise kindly by the practice of their life; for when they came to any strange place (as we often read in the story), there they built up altars, and offered sacrifice unto God, and called on His name. All which they did to testify of their inward joy and thankful acceptance of God's promises in Christ, and of the promised land, though neither were accomplished in their days.

Now as touching ourselves, the same main promises of God that were made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, hath the Lord made and continued unto us; nay, we have the same already accomplished; and we see the same verified more evidently and plainly than any of the patriarchs did. Which being true, our duty is to take the same much more thankfully and kindly at God's hands, than they did or could do; because we have more light and knowledge in the promises of God than ever the patriarchs had.

But we have just cause to bewail the days and times wherein we now live; for whereas we should take the promises of God most joyfully and kindly; the case is far otherwise. For generally, it may be said of our nation and people, that in regard of the mercies and promises of God we are an unkind people. And that this is true (for the most part) in all of us, if we will but a little examine the matter, we shall find it too apparent by many evidences; for:

(1) First, let any of us be brought to a place where we may behold some vain interlude, or a show; a man would not think how wonderfully we are ravished there withal, so as we could find in our hearts to spend whole days in beholding them. But let us be brought to hear the gospel of Christ, His holy Word preached and taught; as it was unto Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (wherein they much rejoiced), and there we sit heavy and drowsy, so as the Word seems loathsome unto us, and one hour is so tedious as we hardly hold it out without sleeping; and if it pass the hour a little, O how impatiently our natures take it! All which shew plainly, that we have no such joy to hear of Christ and His merciful promises as these godly patriarchs had; so that we are both hardhearted and unkind, and altogether insensible of so great favours and mercies of our God towards us.

(2) Secondly, consider men's behaviour in God's worship. It is evident that the greatest part of people worship God but in formal shew, for fashion's sake. These godly patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob built altars in every place where they came, and offered sacrifices unto God to signify their kindness and willing heart towards God for His promises. But now men worship God formally, not in way of thankfulness; but either because the law compels them to it, or else because it is a custom and order which must be kept. For proof thereof, take some one of the common sort, and ask why he cometh into the congregation; he will say he cometh to do as other

men do; but what they do he knoweth not; nor what he himself should do he cannot tell, nor careth much to know. Others also come to worship God, but ask them how they do it, they will say, By saying over the ten commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. But, if the Word be either preached, or read, they regard it not; thinking all God's worship stands in the repeating of those three things. Which sheweth that they worship God but for fashion's sake, and with little more than a plain lip-labour. Another sort there are, which come near to God with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him; for though their bodies be present in the congregation, yet their hearts are wandering about their worldly business, or the works of sin; so that we may truly say, God is not worshipped with faith in the heart. And therefore we are unkind people, and quite degenerate from the faith of our forefathers, the holy patriarchs, who received God's promises so kindly and thankfully.

(3) Thirdly, we have the Word of God daily preached and taught unto us; but how many be there that make conscience of obeying the same in their lives and callings? Men do come and hear, and should learn; but when they come home, they do flat contrary to that which is taught. Now there can be no greater unthankfulness nor unkindness towards God than this: that men should hear and not obey, for disobedience is as the sin of witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:23); nay, the Lord Himself saith that he that maketh no conscience of obedience in his life, is in his actions of God's worship no more acceptable unto God than a murderer is when he kills a man.

Wherefore seeing obedience is so rare to be found among us, and disobedience aboundeth everywhere, it is a plain argument that we take not the promises of God kindly, nor thankfully at His hands; for if we did, we would at least endeavour ourselves to do what God commands in His law, and desireth in His gospel, and so be thankful

unto God for His mercies, shewing forth our thankfulness by our obedience. So that it standeth us in hand, every man to look unto himself for his own part, seeing God hath given us His gospel, the means of our salvation, that therefore we receive and embrace the same, lest God do either take the same from us, or us from it; for we may be sure that the one of these two will follow, if we do daily hear and make no conscience to obey. And thus much of the third fruit of the patriarchs' faith.

4. The fourth fruit of their faith followeth:

And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Herein we are to consider divers points:

(1) First, the text saith, They confessed; that is, they professed openly what they were, and what their religion was; and that not only amongst themselves, but before the face of God's enemies, and heathen men (Gen. 23:4). Abraham told the people of the land of Canaan that he was a stranger and a foreigner among them. And when Jacob came before Pharoah, he confessed that both his days and the days of his fathers, were days of pilgrimage (Gen. 47:9). Now affirming so openly that they were strangers in those countries, they intimated a plain denial and dislike of the religion and idolatry of those heathen countries, and proclaimed themselves to be of another religion; so that this is true which is here said of them, that they made confession and profession of their estate and their faith, and that to the enemies of God.

Hence we learn that we are not to be ashamed of that holy profession of Christian religion to which we are called. Our calling is to profess the gospel and religion of Christ. Now to many it is a reproach and ignominy; but we must learn this special lesson by the example of

these men, that howsoever the world judge of Christ and His religion, yet we have entered into this holy profession, and being called hereunto, must never be ashamed of it; much less deny or forsake the same. In the primitive church it was a contemptible thing, both among the Jews and Grecians to be a Christian; to the one, the gospel was a stumbling block, to the other a laughing stock (1 Cor. 1:23). And yet Paul professed openly, that he was not ashamed of the holy gospel (Rom. 1:16). And so it ought to be with us. We profess Christ's religion, and therefore we must not be ashamed of it. Some there be that know but little, and yet have a good mind to religion; but when they do see some do nothing else but make a mock and a jest of religion, they are thereby daunted and held back from the open profession and embracing of it.

But if we look to be saved by faith, as these men were, we must learn by their example, not to be ashamed of the profession of Christianity, whereto we are called; but must follow this notable example of Abraham and the patriarchs, who were not ashamed, nor afraid to testify their profession among the heathen, whensoever any occasion was offered; for whosoever is ashamed of Christ in this world, Christ will be ashamed of him at the last judgment, before His Father in the world to come (Luke 9:26).

(2) To go further; these patriarchs profess two things: 1. That they were strangers. 2. That they were pilgrims. A stranger is one that hath his abode not in his own, but in a strange country, though he travel not. And a pilgrim is one that is going through a foreign country to his own home, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were strangers, because they dwelt as strangers in tents, not in their own countries where they were born; but in that strange country whither God had called them; and they were pilgrims, because they were always ready to go whithersoever God would call them; and in all places

wheresoever they were, still they waited on God, and sought to Him for the kingdom of heaven.

Now this was not proper to these patriarchs, but is also common to all Christians that look to be saved by the same faith; for David, long after them, confesseth unto God (Psa. 39:12), that he was a stranger and a pilgrim, or sojourner with Him, as all his fathers were. And even we also must follow their faith in the practice of this profession; dwelling here on the earth, we must testify and profess ourselves to be both strangers and pilgrims.

But how (will some say) shall we be answerable to this profession? Answer: For the practice hereof, we must do these three things:

(i) We must use this world and the things thereof, as though we used them not (1 Cor. 7:31). The temporal blessings we here enjoy, we must so use, as though they were not ours; but as strangers do, only for the present occasion; but we must not set our hearts thereon. And the rather to persuade us hereunto, let us consider the practice of these godly patriarchs. They had the promise of the land of Canaan distinctly and absolutely; so as no man in the world hath more right to anything that he possesseth than they had to this land; yet when they came into it, they enjoyed it, and all things therein as strangers; and possessed nothing, but did even buy ground to bury their dead in. And so must we use the things that we have in this world; for our houses, we must so use them as strangers do an inn; and for our goods, we must use them as pilgrims do other men's goods, where they stay for a night; we must so use them always, as being ready and willing to leave them the next morning, or at any time when God shall call us away.

(ii) Secondly, we must cast off all things in this world that may any whit hinder us in our journey to the kingdom of heaven; like unto

good travellers, who will carry nothing with them in the way, but that which may further them to their journey's end; and if anything hinder them in the way, they will cast it from them, and rather lose it than be hindered from their home. But what is that which is burdensome to us in this our journey to heaven? This St Paul sheweth, when he saith (2 Tim. 3:6), that certain simple women are laden with sin. Behold, sin is that that ladeth us; and the author to the Hebrews calleth sin (Heb. 12:1), the thing that hangeth on so fast, and presseth us down. Therefore if we will be good travellers and pilgrims toward the kingdom of heaven, we must take heed of sin; for that will hold us down that we cannot get one step forward, but will draw us backward unto hell; for the way is strait that leadeth unto life, and the gate narrow, and few there be that can enter in to it (Matt. 7:13). He that would come hither, must come with an humble and pure heart; for the gate will not suffer any that is laden with sin to enter therein. The proud man, whose heart is puffed up with pride; and the covetous man, whose heart is enlarged with a desire of gain; the ambitious man, who is with child with worldly pomp and state; and the luxurious and voluptuous man, who feedeth and fatteth himself with earthly and carnal pleasures; all these are grown too big to enter into this strait gate. But the meek in spirit, who lead an humble and innocent life, these shall tread in this path, although it be narrow, and enter in at this door, though it be strait. And therefore we must cast off every sin, by the practice of true repentance; and so make ourselves fit pilgrims for the way to heaven.

(iii) Thirdly, we must learn contentment of heart in every estate of life which God shall send upon us. We must be contented as well in sickness, as in health; in poverty, as in plenty; in trouble, as in peace; and in good report, and ill report; and in all estates of life and death. A pilgrim in his way taketh all things patiently that befall him; and if he be injured any way, he puts up with it quietly, without

seeking revenge or making complaint, till he come home; where he knows he shall have audience and redress. Even so must we behave ourselves in this our pilgrimage to heaven; in hope of that redress and rest we shall have, we must bear all things patiently that befall us in this life, which is the way; and doing these three things, we shall so become good pilgrims and strangers in this world.

Here, two questions offer themselves to be considered:

(i) First, if every man both in profession and practice, must shew himself to be a pilgrim and stranger in this world; whether then is it not a good state of life for a man to contemn the world and all things in it, and to betake himself to perpetual beggary and voluntary poverty? Answer: The world in Scripture is taken divers ways;

(a) First, for the corruption and sins in the world; and these must be contemned by all means possible; yea, that is the best religion which teacheth best how to contemn these; and he the best man who most forsakes them in what calling soever he lives. (b) Secondly, for temporal blessings, as money, lands, wealth, sustenance, and such like outward things as concern the necessary or convenient maintenance of this natural life. And in this sense the world is not to be contemned, for in themselves these earthly things are the good gifts of God, which no man can simply contemn, without injury to God's disposing hand and providence, who hath ordained them for natural life.

The papists esteem it an angelic state of perfection, approaching near to the state of glory, when a man forsaketh all, and betakes himself to voluntary poverty, as begging friars do. But indeed it is a mere device of man's brain, and hath no warrant in God's Word, which decreeth thus: that he that will not labour (in some lawful calling) shall not eat (2 Thess. 3:10).

Objection: But here they will say that our Saviour Christ speaking to the rich young man, bade him, go and sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and he should have treasure in heaven (Mark 10:21). Answer: That commandment was not ordinary but special, belonging to that young man. It was a commandment of trial given to him only, as this was to Abraham, when God said, Abraham, kill thy son (Gen. 22:2). And the reason of that commandment was peculiar to him; namely, to shew him his corruption, and to discover his hypocrisy. Again, howsoever the young man was commanded to sell all, yet he is not commanded to give all; but only thus: Sell all, and give to the poor.

2nd Objection: Again, they object that Christ Himself was a beggar, and His disciples also, and had nothing of their own, but went up and down in the world as beggars; and lived of that which others ministered unto them. Answer: This is a mere forgery and cannot be proved out of the Word of God. The bag which Judas carried doth prove the contrary; for he was (as it were) the steward in Christ's family, who looked to their provision, and to their contribution to the poor; as may be seen (John 13:27-29). Yea, Christ's disciples, though they left the present use of their houses and places; yet they gave not over their title and possession in them; for Christ went to Peter's house, where He healed his wife's mother (Matt. 8:14). And after the time of Christ's passion, Peter and the other disciples returned to their ships again, and became fishers for a time, for Christ (John 21) after His resurrection, appeared to them while they were fishing.

(ii) Second question: Whether a man may lawfully seek to be rich, seeing we must profess ourselves to be pilgrims and strangers in this life? Answer: Riches are taken two ways: 1. For things sufficient. 2. For abundance. For the first, by things sufficient, I mean things necessary and meet for a man's estate to maintain him and his

family; and thus a man may seek to be rich; for we are taught to pray in the fourth petition, Give us this day our daily bread, that is, things meet and needful for the day. From whence I reason thus: That which we may lawfully ask at God's hand, we may lawfully seek for; but we may lawfully ask of God all things necessary to this life; therefore we may lawfully use the means to attain unto them. And this Agur's prayer sheweth also (Prov. 30:8), Give me not poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me; where we see it is requisite a man should labour for things necessary to this life. Now, because man's corrupt nature is to gripple, that he would not be contented with the whole world though it were all his; therefore we must learn this rule of contentment for worldly things; namely, to follow the counsel of wise and godly men, who are neither covetous nor riotous, but rest contented with that which is sufficient. As for the wearing of apparel, we have no special rule nor precept in God's word; and therefore our direction must be the example and fashion of the most grave and godly in that calling of which we are; whose precedent must be our direction in all cases, whereof we have no precept nor rule in God's Word.

But if riches be taken in the second sense, for abundance, above that which is competent and sufficient; then it is not lawful for a man to seek to be rich. For proof hereof, we have the plain testimony of the Word of God. Paul saith (1 Tim. 6:8,9), When we have food and raiment, we must therewith be contented; for they that will be rich fall into temptation and snares, and into many foolish and noisome lusts which drown men in perdition and destruction; where the apostle doth not simply condemn a rich estate, but rather the desire to be rich, that is, a desire to have more than is necessary for the maintaining of a man's estate. Yet this is the common sin of the world, men are so covetous that they will not be contented with that which is enough, but shall toil and moil for more, till they have

gotten so much under their hands as would honestly and sufficiently maintain ten men of their estate and calling. But all such are condemned by the testimony of the Holy Ghost, in the place aforenamed.

Question: What if God give abundance to a man by lawful means; what must such a man do? Answer: When God sendeth riches in abundance to any man, he must think himself to be appointed of God as a steward over them, for the good disposing of them to the glory of God and the good of His church; always remembering this rule of the prophet David (Psa. 62:10), If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them. He saith not, If riches increase, refuse them; but set not thy heart on them. And thus much of these questions.

Now this practice of the patriarchs is as necessary for us in these days as ever it was; for the cause why we profit little after much hearing of God's Word is this; we have not behaved ourselves like pilgrims and strangers in this world, but the cares of the things of this life have choked it up (Matt. 13:22), that it could take no ground nor root in our hearts. When we have heard the Word we remember it not, because our hearts and the affections thereof are set on the pleasures and commodities of the world. We therefore must shake off this filthy sin, and learn to behave ourselves like pilgrims and strangers, not entangling ourselves with the things of this life, but using them as though we used them not, so as they be no hindrance to the growth of God's grace in us.

“For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” Hebrews 11:14-16.

“For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country.” (v.14).

In the former verse was set down the constancy of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob in the faith. Now in the 14th, 15th and 16th verses, the Holy Ghost proceedeth to amplify and enlarge the commendation of their perseverance in the faith; for the scope of all these verses is to prove that all these particularly were constant in the faith unto the end. The proof is made by the substantial reason, the sum whereof is this: Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob sought for their country which was heaven, and therefore they were constant in the true faith.

But some may think that this reason is not substantial, for men may seek for heaven that never had true saving faith. As Balaam desired that his end might be like the end of the righteous (Num. 23:10), wherewith no doubt he desired the state of the righteous after this life.

I answer that this desire of Balaam was not grounded upon any constant persuasion, nor settled resolution, but upon some sudden motion. Secondly, though he desired to die the death of the righteous, yet he would not love the life of the righteous; he had no

delight to walk in the way to come to that end which they walked in; without which no man ordinarily can come to it.

Yet further some will say, Many shall seek (as our Saviour Christ saith) to enter in at the strait gate of the kingdom of heaven, and shall not be able (Luke 13:24). Therefore to seek for heaven is no sufficient argument of true faith.

Answer: True indeed, many shall seek to come to heaven and shall not be able to enter; because they seek when the door of mercy is shut, and when the day of grace is past; for there is a time of grace wherein the Lord will be found. Now if men seek Him not in this time, though they seek Him never so long after, yet they shall not find Him. But the seeking of these patriarchs was a sound and constant seeking, and so a notable fruit of their true faith. For, 1. They sought an heavenly country; 2. They sought it in due time; not for a brunt, but through the whole course of their lives; 3. They went the right way; denying themselves and their estate in this life, as being strangers upon earth; and they were willing to forsake all things in this world to attain heaven, esteeming it as their true dwelling place, and their eternal rest.

Now more particularly, the Holy Ghost divideth this reason into two parts, and handleth the same severally:

I. He proveth that they sought a country in this verse; and

II. That this country which they sought was heaven itself (vv. 15,16).

I. For the first part, that they sought a country, is thus proved:

They which say they are pilgrims and strangers, shew plainly that they seek a country; but Abraham, Isaac and Jacob said of

themselves that they were pilgrims and strangers; therefore they shew plainly that they seek a country.

The first part of this reason is evident in itself; for he that saith he is a pilgrim and a stranger in any place, sheweth plainly that he is gone forth of his own country, and therefore seeketh one. The second part of the reason is assumed from their confession in the end of the former verse: and confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth; from whence the conclusion is laid down in this 14th verse, that therefore these patriarchs sought for a country.

In this reason observe:

1. First, that the author of this epistle had diligently read the history of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, penned by Moses in the book of Genesis; and in reading had observed that which they particularly confessed of themselves in many places of that book; that they were pilgrims and strangers; yea, also he gathered from their confession this most heavenly meditation, that therefore they were not in their own country, but sought another. These three things, then, the author of this epistle used about the holy Scriptures: Reading, meditation and observation.

Whence we learn that all God's ministers, and those which prepare themselves to the work of the ministry, are diligently to read and study the holy Scriptures, and to meditate therein. No doubt, the author of this epistle was an apostle, and had most notable gifts by virtue of his calling, and yet he bestowed pains in viewing the particular words of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, recorded by Moses in the book of Genesis. Daniel also was an extraordinary prophet, yet (as we may read (Dan. 9:2)) he studied with admirable diligence the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. And Timothy, though he were a

disciple (Acts 16:1) and well learned, yet Paul chargeth him to give attendance to reading, to exhortation and to doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13). And Ezekiel is commanded to eat the roll, and to fill his belly with it (Ezek. 3:3). And St John is likewise commanded to eat up the little book (Rev. 10:9,10), which thing he did; all which strongly enforce the former duty, shewing that God's servant in the ministry must, as it were, eat up God's book; that in judgment and understanding, he may digest as far as is possible the deep things of God, and the hardest places of the Scriptures; here he must lay his foundation, and hither have recourse from all other writings whatsoever in any matter of doubt.

This direction is most necessary for the schools of the prophets and for all God's ministers; and yet notwithstanding, the contrary practice beareth sway in the world. For in the popish universities most of their divines apply themselves to study the books of certain schoolmen, and the expositors or commentators thereupon. These are applied day and night though they be both many and large, and full of needless quiddities; and oftentimes they be also publicly expounded, whereas in the meantime the Bible lieth neglected, or little regarded; wherein we may see the notable work of the devil and his malice toward the church of God; for the schools of the prophets are the fountains of learning. Now when as Satan by this means doth steal away from them the study of the Bible, and instead thereof foisteth in corrupt human writings; hereby he poisons the fountains, to the danger of infecting the whole church. And as this is common in the places of popery; so likewise some fault is this way committed among us that be Protestants; for many in their private studies take little pains in the book of God, but apply themselves wholly to the writings of men; as councils, fathers, schoolmen and other expositors; and in the handling of the Scripture, they glory more to prove a point of doctrine by multiplicity of human testimonies than

by the written Word. But the truth is, thus to do is to prefer the handmaid before the mistress; and as for the opening and expounding of Scripture by other writers, it is no such point of deep learning; a man of ordinary capacity and diligence may easily deliver what others have done before him. But to open the Scripture soundly and purely, as it ought to be, is of another nature than these men take it; and hereto the sound study of the text itself will prove the best help, as they will confess who have tried most of all. And though the best men's works be but base stuff to the pure Word of God, yet the writings of holy men must not be contemned; but must be read and regarded in their place, for our furnishing and enabling to the study of the Scriptures, for the helping of our knowledge and judgment in the Word of God; they that hold or practice the contrary, know not what helps they be, and what light they yield to many dark places of Scripture. But still above and beyond, before and after all, the Word of God must be eaten up of us, and studied with all diligence.

2. Secondly, in that the author of this epistle noteth their particular sentence, and by consequence gathereth this meditation out of it, that they sought a country; hereby all men are taught to exercise themselves in hearing and reading all the places of the Bible, even the histories of men therein, and out of the words to gather godly meditations. So Paul saith to the Colossians (Col. 3:16), Let the word of God dwell plenteously in you. The prophet David also noteth it for the property of a good man to meditate in the law of God day and night (Psa. 1:2). And the practice of the blessed virgin Mary is registered as an example for us to follow; that she kept all the sayings of Christ in her heart (Luke 2:19). But pity it is to see how reading the word of God is laid aside; for it is so little practiced, that men nowadays will not be at charge to buy a Bible; for books of statutes, men will not only have them in their houses, but at their fingers

ends; but Bible they have none; and if they have, it lieth on the desk or table, and they read it not; and if sometime they read, yet they never meditate thereon, as we are taught in this place.

3. Further, whereas the Holy Ghost reasoneth thus upon these examples; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were strangers and pilgrims, therefore they sought a country. Herein He teacheth us this special point, to wit; that a doctrine, though it be not expressed in plain words in the Bible; yet being gathered thence by right and just consequence, is no less to be believed and received, than that which is plainly expressed; and therefore they are far to blame which mislike these terms in divinity: person, nature, sacrament, consubstantial, trinity, c., because they are not expressed in the Word. But they may with good conscience and much profit be retained; because, though not literally, yet in sense and meaning they are contained in the Scripture, and may by just consequence be gathered thence. And we deny not transubstantiation because the word is not in the Scripture, but because the matter is not there; nor can by necessary consequence be derived from it, but rather the contrary.

Again, many refuse these doctrines: the proceeding of the Holy Ghost from the Son, and the baptism of children, because they are not expressed in the Scripture. But hence we answer, that though they be not expressly set down in so many words, yet by just consequence they may be soundly gathered out of the scripture, and therefore are true doctrines, no less to be believed than that which is plainly expressed.

And thus much for the first part of the reason.

“And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” (vv.15,16).

II. Here the Holy Ghost proveth the second part of the former argument by two reasons: the first is contained in the 15th verse and the beginning of the 16th. It is taken from the distinction of countries, and may be framed thus: They either sought an earthly country or an heavenly country. But not an earthly, therefore they sought an heavenly country. The first part of this reason is clear of itself. The second part is in the fifteenth verse; from whence followeth the conclusion in the beginning of the 16th.

1. To come to the first part in these words:

And if they had been mindful of the country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

That is, if they had regarded or thought upon Mesopotamia or Chaldea, from whence they came, and where they were born; with any desire to have enjoyed the profits or pleasures thereof; they had leisure enough to have returned back thither, by reason of the length of their days which they lived, in the land whither God called them.

Here observe two points:

(1) First, that they are not mindful of, or (as the word imports) they remember not the country from whence they came; but when God gave them commandment to depart thence, and not to return to Mesopotamia again; after this commandment given, they came forth, and did forget their own country.

Whence we learn that howsoever usually forgetful be a vice; yet some kind of forgetfulness is a notable virtue; namely, to forget the things that displease God, and which He would not have us to think upon. The church (Psa. 45:10) is commanded to forget her own people, and her father's house; that is, her own wills and desires; she must never think thereof (nor of any other thing whereby God is displeased), unless it be with dislike.

This condemneth the practice of many aged persons in these days, who delight themselves among the younger sort, to tell of the bad practices of their youth; in wantonness, contentions, and breaking God's commandments. But in so doing they sin grievously; for a man must not remember his sins, but with dislike and detestation; being grieved with them, and angry with himself for them; or else to teach others how to avoid them.

And as this kind of forgetfulness is a good virtue, so there is also a virtuous and good remembrance; namely, to be mindful of that which may please God; as of God's judgments, to be humbled thereby; and of His mercies, to be thankful unto almighty God for them; and of His commandments, to become obedient to His will. These things therefore we ought to imprint by diligence in our memories.

(2) Secondly, here observe, God calleth them out of their own country, and biddeth them live in the land of Canaan as strangers and pilgrims; and so they do, abiding there without any purpose to return; nay, they are not mindful of their former home.

Hence we are taught to be constant in that calling whereunto God hath called us. It is a fearful sin for a man to go back from that calling in which God hath placed him. When the Israelites abode not patiently and constantly with God in the wilderness, but desired to

shake off the calling of God, and to return to Egypt, there to sit by the fleshpots again, they had God's hand upon them grievously; as we may read at large in Psalm 78. Lot's wife for looking back, when she was commanded to the contrary, was fearfully and strangely punished, being turned into a pillar of salt (Gen.19:26). And our Saviour Christ saith (Luke 9:62), No man that putteth his hand to the Lord's plough, and looketh back again, is apt to the kingdom of God. As though He had said, He that starteth from the plough, is not fit for the field; no more is he that shifteth from his calling, fit for God's service.

To apply this to ourselves; God hath called us to profess Christian religion, whence we are called Protestants. We therefore must profess the same constantly, and hold it fast, without wavering or doubting (even without being mindful of that spiritual Egypt of darkness and superstition whence we are delivered); much more, without turning to any other; this being the true religion, which is grounded on God's Word.

Again, in this our calling of Christianity, we have vowed unto God for ourselves, to renounce the flesh, the world and the devil. Now, this being our calling; as we have promised, and undertaken it; so we must obey it in ourselves, fighting manfully every day against the world, the flesh and the devil. For if we profess religion in word, and do not obey it in deed; we make ourselves unfit for the kingdom of heaven. But alas, men are like to the swine that returneth to the puddle, though he be washed never so clean; and to the dog that returneth to his vomit; for most men do but serve the flesh, and the world, and the lusts thereof; therein is their joy, and their heart's case; take away these things from them, and thou dost take away their lives; so far are they from seeking the kingdom of heaven as these patriarchs did.

Thus much for the first part of the reason.

2. Now followeth the second part, which is this: But they sought not a place in earth; and therefore the conclusion followeth, That they desire a country, which is heaven; in these words:

But now they desire a better.

But some will say the patriarchs were dead many hundred years before this was written; how then can they be now said to desire a country? Answer: The author of this epistle here observeth, and followeth the manner of them that write histories; who speak of things past long ago as though they were now present.

Now it is said that they desire a better country; these patriarchs had laid before them two countries, the land of Canaan and the kingdom of heaven; and of these two, they might choose whither they would, to be their portion and inheritance, upon which they would bestow their hearts. Now, they esteemed heaven (though it was to come) better than Canaan, though present; and therefore made choice of heaven, and longed for it.

Where we learn that as we must be thankful to God for all His blessings; so among them all, we should choose the best. This David doth; for being put to choose whether he would rather live in safeguard and in solace with the wicked and ungodly, than in base estate and in great danger near to God's sanctuary, he saith (Psa. 84:10), He had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of his God, than to dwell in the tabernacles of wickedness. And thus we see in general that their choice was of the better. Particularly the text addeth:

This is, an heavenly.

In which words is laid down the last and chief point in this reason, to wit, that the patriarchs desired a better country than the land of Canaan, and that was an heavenly country, even heaven itself; the proof whereof is principally intended in this place.

Now whereas the patriarchs, being our forefathers in faith, and patterns whom we must follow, did desire heaven; by their example, every one of us is taught the same duty, to aim at another and a better country than that in which we live, even at the kingdom of heaven; and not to think that this world is the country we are born for. This better country we must all seek for, whatsoever we be, high and low, young and old, learned and unlearned, if we will follow these godly patriarchs. And this we must do not at death only, seeking this world all our life long, for that is to despise heaven; but even in the time of our youth and strength of our days must we set our hearts on heaven; endeavouring so to use this world, and the things thereof, that when we die we may come to heaven, that blessed country, which we desired and sought for in our lives.

And to persuade us hereunto, let us consider the reasons following:

(1) First, worldly wisdom teacheth this: If a man dwell on his own land, and in his own house, he is careless; but if in another man's house, whereof he hath no lease, but contrariwise is certain to be put out he knoweth not when; this man in time will provide himself of another, that so he may remove into it and not be destitute; and if it be within his power, he will provide a better, that so he may not remove for the worse. Behold, while we live in this world, our bodies are tents and tabernacles wherein our souls do dwell for a time; and besides, this time is uncertain; for there is no man that can say certainly that he shall live to the next hour. Therefore, we must, every

one of us, provide for himself a dwelling place in heaven, where we may abide for ever in all blessedness.

(2) Again, consider the state of all sorts of men in the world; for sin, atheism and profaneness abound everywhere, the blaspheming of God's holy name and the breaking of His Sabbath; besides daily sin against the second table. Now all these cry continually for vengeance, and for God's judgments to be inflicted upon us, and we know not how God will deal with us for our sins; whether he will take from us our goods and good name, our health, friends, or life itself; and therefore it standeth us in hand to provide for ourselves a resting place wherein we may abide for ever, after this frail life full of misery is ended.

(3) Thirdly, if we shall not do this, mark what followeth: this, and no other, is our estate: By nature we are the children of wrath and of the devil; and by our manifold sins we have made our case far worse. Now what is due unto us for this corruption, and for these transgressions? Surely not heaven, but another place; even the contrary, the place of eternal woe and destruction, the bottomless pit of hell. Now, if this be our due by nature, then let not sin nor Satan deceive us; persuading us that we may come to heaven and still continue in the state of our corrupt nature; but let us labour by all means to eschew this place, which is due unto us by nature; that through the gift of faith in Christ, we may come to the heavenly city, which these godly patriarchs so seriously sought for. But if we remain in our sins, and so die, we are sure to go to the place of destruction, and there to abide in woe and torments, with the devil and his angels for evermore; so that it stands us in hand to use all good means to come to heaven, or else our case will be most miserable of all creatures; for perdition and destruction will be our portion world without end.

This must awake and stir up our dead and drowsy hearts, that are so besotted with sin, that though we hear, yet we neither learn, nor practice. In worldly things, we can take care and pains; but if we will do anything for our own everlasting good, let us labour by all means to come to heaven; for if we miss of that city, it had been good for us if we had never been born; or that we would have been the vilest creatures in the world rather than men. For when the unreasonable creatures die, there is an end of all their misery; but if we die, and be not prepared for that place, our death will be unto us the beginning of all woe and misery.

3. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city.

In these words is laid down a second reason whereby is proved that these patriarchs died in faith, seeking their country in heaven. The reason is drawn from the testimony of God Himself, recorded by Moses in the book of Exodus, where God saith, He is the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Exod. 3:6).

The exposition.

Wherefore

That is, that this might appear and be evident that these patriarchs died in faith, and sought this country of heaven, God was content to vouchsafe and grant unto them this favour, to be called their God.

Was not ashamed.

To be, or not to be ashamed of one, properly belongs to men; and it cannot be affirmed properly of God, that He is ashamed or blusheth (as the word signifieth); but the meaning is that God vouchsafed

unto them this favour, and shewed them this honour and dignity. Question: What was this honour and dignity which He shewed unto them? Answer: To be called their God. By which is meant thus much; that God accepteth them in His mercy, to be such, with whom He would make His covenant of salvation, and not with them alone, but with their seed after them. Secondly, that He chose them to make the covenant in their names for all the rest. Thirdly, He vouchsafed them a special and extraordinary favour, even that Himself would bear their names, and they should bear His; making His glorious name renowned to the world's end by this title: The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Hereupon the reason is framed thus; God would not be called in special manner the God of unfaithful men, but rather would bestow such a special favour upon believers; but that favour did God vouchsafe to these three patriarchs; therefore doubtless they lived and died in that holy faith.

In that it is said that God was not ashamed to be called their God; here,

(1) First we learn that God doth not vouchsafe His mercy equally to all men, but some men have more prerogative in His favours and mercies than others. Kings make choice among all their subjects, of some men, whom they will prefer to be of their counsel or guard, and to whom they will give special countenance, and dispense their favours more liberally than to all; even so, God among all Abraham's kindred maketh choice of these three persons, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to bestow on them such special honour as He vouchsafed not to any of their forefathers before them, nor posterity after them. No marvel therefore though He bestow not His special mercy upon all, seeing He dispenseth not His inferior favours unto all alike. And yet for all this, He is no acceptor of persons; for he only is properly said to be an acceptor of persons, that preferreth one before another, in

regard of some quality in the person; but God vouchsafed this honour unto these three only of mere mercy and goodwill, and not for anything He respected in them.

This confuteth the conceit and error of many men, broached abroad in this age, that God doth equally love all men as they are men, and hath chosen all men to salvation, as they are men, and hath rejected none; for (say they) it standeth with equity and good reason that the Creator should love all His creatures equally; and this opinion they would build upon the general promise made to Abraham; because that in him, God said all the nations of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 22:18). But we must understand that “all” is not always taken generally, but sometimes indefinitely for many; and so Paul speaking of this covenant of grace in Christ, saith, The Lord made Abraham a father of many nations (Rom. 4:17), where repeating the covenant recorded by Moses, he putteth “many” for “all”. Again, grant that Abraham were the father of all nations, and that in him all the kindreds of the earth were blessed; yet it followeth not that therefore God should love all men equally and alike; for He may love the faithful of all nations, and yet not love all men in all nations; for, in His bountiful mercy in Christ, He preferreth some before others. And this answer seems the better, because we may have some reason to think that God will save some of every nation, but no ground to imagine He will save all of any nation; much less all of every nation.

(2) Here we may see that God honoureth those His servants that honoureth Him, as he saith to Eli the priest (1 Sam. 2:30). Which is a point to be marked diligently; for this God is the glorious king of heaven and earth; yet he abaseth Himself, and is content to be named by His creature, advancing them by abasing Himself to be called their God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Where we may apparently see, rather than God will not have them honoured

that honour Him, He will abase Himself, that they thereby may be honoured.

Hence we may learn many things:

(i) First, that all that profess religion truly, must inure themselves to go through good report and ill report, and in all estates to be content, for God's honour's sake, as Paul saith, I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content; I can be abased, and I can abound; everywhere in all things I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry; to abound and to have want (Phil. 4:11,12). Thus spake that holy man of God; and so must we all endeavour to say, and accordingly to practice. And the reason is good, because if a man honour God, however he be contemned or not regarded in this world, yet God will honour him, and esteem highly of him; that will prove the way to all true honour, as it hath done, even in this world to all that tried it.

(ii) Secondly, hence we learn which is the true way to get found honour amongst men; namely, to honour God. Good estimation in the world is not to be contemned, for the Lord commandeth all inferiors to honour their superiors, whereby He also bindeth every man to preserve his own dignity. Now God honoureth them that honour Him; therefore the surest way to get true honour amongst men is this: let a man first lay his foundation well, and begin with God, and set all the affections of his heart and thoughts on this: to honour God.

Question: How may a man honour God? Answer: By forsaking the rebellious ways of sin and ungodliness, and walking in the way of righteousness through the course of his life. This doth God take to be an honour unto His high majesty. And when a man doth this unfeignedly, then God will honour him, even among men, so far

forth as shall be for his good; for God hath all men's hearts in His hand, and will make them to honour those that honour Him. So St Paul saith, If any man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour (2 Tim. 2:21); not only in eternal glory after death, but also in grace and favour with God's church. This confuteth the opinion, and condemneth the practice of many, who would fain have good report in the world, and be spoken well of by all men; but what course (I pray you) take they to come by this good name? They do not begin with God, and lay their foundation by honouring Him; but they strive to please men, whether it be by doing well or ill they care not, their only care is to please all; for that is their rule and resolution, all must be pleased; and because most men are ill, they rather chose oftentimes to do ill than they will not please the greater sort. But he that beginneth to get honour by pleasing men, beginneth at a wrong end; for by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in this place, the way to get sound approbation before men, is first to begin with God, and to honour Him.

(iii) Thirdly, if God will honour them that honour Him, then by the contrary, consider what a miserable case many a man is in; for those that dishonour God, God will dishonour them again, as we may see at large and very plainly in the example of Eli and his two sons; for them that honour me (saith the Lord unto him), I will honour; and they that despise me shall be despised (1 Sam. 2:30). And in Zechariah we may read that the man that by blasphemy, theft or perjury, dishonoureth God, the flying curse of the Lord will enter his house, and remain in the midst thereof, and consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof (Zech. 5:4). And because Eli did more honour his children than God, therefore the Lord threateneth the destruction of him and his family; and according as the Lord had threatened, so it came to pass; for when the Israelites

fought with the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:11), his two sons were slain, and he at the hearing of the news fell down and brake his neck.

Now, if this be so, what shall we say of our own nation and people, amongst whom it is as common to dishonour God as ever it was amongst the papists or pagans; partly by light using of His holy titles, and taking His name in vain; and partly by swearing, and open blasphemy; and sometimes even by abominable perjury. Nay, it is many men's rule, that they may swear, dissemble, lie and forswear for advantage. These sins are some of them rife in all sorts of people, and hardly shall you talk with a man that doth not by vain oaths dishonour God; yea, it is so common, that children, so soon as they can crawl or lisp out a word, the first thing they can speak is to curse or swear, and take God's name in vain, whereby God is dishonoured every way; so as it is a wonder that the earth doth not open, and swallow up many men quick, for their swearing and blasphemy. And whereas God's judgments are often grievously inflicted upon us in many places of the land; we may persuade ourselves that among other sins it is for our blasphemy and taking God's name in vain. And if it be not speedily redressed, it is to be feared lest God will rain down His judgments upon us, and in His wrath sweep us all away; and take away the father with the child, the good with the bad, because there is no reformation of so vile, and yet so needless a sin.

To be called their God.

Observe here further that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob could all of them say, God is my God. Now that which these worthy patriarchs could say of themselves, we must every one of us in our own persons labour for; for their example is and must be a rule for us to follow. We therefore must labour for this assurance, by God's grace to say as

the holy patriarchs did say, The true Jehovah is my God; and of this I am resolved, and undoubtedly assured in mine own confidence.

Question: How shall we be able to say unfeignedly that God is my God? Answer: By becoming His servants and people in deed and truth; for to him who is one of God's people, God is always his God. But how shall we become God's true servants? Answer: By setting our hearts upon the true God, and giving them wholly unto Him and to His service; and restraining ourselves from all occasions of sin, because sin displeaseth Him.

Question: But how shall a man set his heart wholly on God? Answer: This he doth when he loveth Him above all, and feareth Him above all, and above all things is zealous for God's glory; when he hath full confidence in God's Word and promises, and is more grieved for displeasing God than for all things in the world besides. Or more plainly thus: when a man doth set his heart on God, when his heart is so affected, that when God commands, he is always ready to obey. So the Lord saith (Hos. 2:23), I will say to them that were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God. And in the psalms the Lord saith (Psa. 27:8), Seek ye my face; then the holy man's heart as an echo giveth answer, I seek thy face, O God. And such an one is the heart of him that is indeed the servant and child of God, and one of God's people.

For He hath prepared for them a city.

These words are a reason of the former, proving that God was not ashamed to be called their God, because He prepared a city for them. And indeed, this shews evidently that God was greatly delighted with them, rather than ashamed of them; for had he been ashamed of them, He would have shut them out of His presence. Herein

therefore He declared His love and favour, that by preparing this city, He procured that they should live in His sight for evermore.

Hence we learn that he which hath God for his God, hath all things with Him, according to the common proverb, Have God, and have all. And on the contrary, lack God, and lack all. An therefore David saith (Psa. 144:15), Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord. Other things which here might be added have been handled before.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.” Hebrews 11:17-19.

In the former verses, we heard the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob commended jointly together. Now the Holy Ghost returneth to the commendation of their faith severally. And first, He begins with Abraham’s faith, whereof He had formerly propounded two works or actions; first, his going out of his own country, and secondly, his abode in a strange land. Now here followeth the third, which is the most notable work of all, wherein his faith shines most gloriously; and his example here is unmatched. The particular points herein are these:

I. First, the work of his faith is plainly laid shown in his offering up of Isaac.

II. Secondly, the same work of faith is notably commended by three special arguments; to wit,

1. First, by three great impediments that might have hindered the work of faith, as we shall see in their place (vv.17,18);
2. Secondly, by his victory over these impediments (v.19);
3. Thirdly, by the issue of this temptation, and his work of faith therein, at the end of the 19th verse.

I. For the first, the fact of Abraham's faith here commended is this: That he offered up Isaac his son. It may first of all be demanded, how Abraham could offer up his son by faith, considering it is against the law of nature and the laws of God for a man to kill his own son; which Abraham must do, if he did offer him up in sacrifice to God. For answer hereunto, we need go no further than the story (Gen. 22), and yield unto it; as for example the second commandment forbiddeth any man to make any graven image; even Moses by a special commandment made a brazen serpent in the wilderness to be a figure of Christ. So the sixth commandment Thou shalt not kill, is an ordinary commandment, and bindeth the conscience of every man to obey the same; yet God comes with a special commandment to Abraham and saith, Abraham, kill thy son; and therefore the ordinary commandment of the second table giveth place for the time. And so all the commandments, Thou shalt do thus and thus, unless God command otherwise; for God is an absolute Lord, and so above His own laws, He is not bound unto them, but may dispense with them, and with us for the keeping of them at His will and pleasure. And thus was Abraham warranted to sacrifice his son; namely, by virtue of a special and personal commandment to himself alone.

But if Abraham had not had this particular commandment, the sacrificing of Isaac had been unlawful and abominable; for the killing of a man is a heinous sin; much more is the killing of a man's own son without special commandment; for that is against nature; and therefore the Lord by Jeremiah doth severely condemn the Jews for burning their sons and daughters to sacrifice (Jer. 7:31), without any warrant from Him; though it may be they would pretend their imitation of Abraham in the sacrificing of Isaac; yea, and to shew His detestation of that fact, He changeth the name of the place, calling it the valley of slaughter (v.32), and in the New Testament it is used to signify hell (Matt. 5:29,30). And because this sin is so odious, it is

rather to be thought that Jephthah did not kill his daughter in sacrifice to the Lord (as some think he did), especially being a man commended for his faith by the Holy Ghost; but thereof we shall speak when we come to his example (v.32).

Thus we see Abraham had ground for this fact to do it by faith, even God's special command. But here it will be said that Abraham did not offer up his son indeed; for though he had bound him, and laid him on the altar, yet when he lifted up the knife to have killed him, the angel stayed his hand, and suffered him not (Gen. 22:11,12). How then can it be true which is here said, that he offered him up? For the writer of the story must make true reports; but it seems the writer hereof is deceived in the very principal point, affirming Isaac was offered, when in truth he was not. Answer: God is the author and indicter of this story, and in God's sight and estimation he was offered, though not in the world; and therefore it is so said in regards of God's acceptance; because Abraham's purpose was to have done it, and if he had not been stayed, he would have done it.

Where we note a point of special comfort, to wit, that God in His children and servants doth accept the will for the deed; so Paul saith (2 Cor. 8:12), If there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not; speaking of their relieving of the poor, he telleth them that God regardeth not so much a man's work, as the heart wherewith he doth the work. And therefore the poor widow in the gospel (Luke 21:3) is said by our Saviour Christ to have cast more into the treasury (though it were but two mites) than many rich men that cast in great abundance; more in heart, not in substance.

This serveth to stay the heart of many a man that is found bruised in conscience; for seeing his weak obedience, and the greatness of his

sins past, he begins to call his election into question. Now what must a man do in this case? Answer: Surely he must go on forward in obedience, and endeavour himself to continue therein; and then though he fail many times through infirmity, yet for his endeavour, God will accept of him, and be pleased with the same.

This doctrine is very comfortable to a distressed conscience; but yet it must not make any man bold to sin; for many abuse this doctrine, and say that though they live in sin, yet God will accept them, for they love God in their heart. But they deceive themselves; for this merciful dealing of God in accepting the will for the deed is only towards those that endeavour themselves sincerely to leave their sins, to believe in God, and to walk in obedience; but such as flatter themselves lying in their sins, God will not be merciful to them (Deut. 29:19,20).

Here further it may well be demanded; How Abraham could take Isaac and bind him, and lay him on the altar to have offered him; for though the common opinion be that he was but thirteen years old, yet the more received opinion of the best writers is that Isaac was 25 or 27 years old. How then could Abraham, being an old man of more than 120 years, be able to bind Isaac being a young and lusty man, and lay him on the altar to kill him? For though Abraham had a commandment to kill Isaac, yet we find not that God commanded Isaac to suffer himself to be killed; now nature moves every one to seek to save his own life, and to resist such as would kill us. How then was Isaac brought to yield thus far to his father?

For answer hereunto, we are to know that Abraham was no ordinary man, but a prophet, and that an excellent and extraordinary prophet; so God testifieth of him to Abimelech; He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee (Gen. 20:7); yea, he was esteemed and revered as a

prophet, and an honourable man, even of the heathen. The Hittites tell him, Thou art a prince of God amongst us (Gen. 23:6).

Now being a man of so high place, and so great regard even in the world; doubtless he was of much more authority in his own house. It is therefore very likely that he tells Isaac his son, that he had a special commandment from God to kill him in sacrifice. Now, Isaac being an holy man, and well brought up, hearing this, is contented to be sacrificed, and obeys his father herein.

This I speak, not as certain, but as most probable; and it is the judgment of the best learned, who have good experience in the Scripture.

This circumstance well observed, serves greatly for the commendation of them both; of Abraham the father, that had so religiously brought up his only son, that was most dear unto him that he would not resist the will of God revealed unto him, though it cost him his life. Oh that parents would follow Abraham in so doing to their children; then would it go well with the church of God. Again, Isaac's behaviour is here admirable, that he would not resist his weak and aged father, but suffered him to bind him, and to lay him on the altar; yielding himself unto death when his father told him, My son, God will have it so.

This example must be a pattern of obedience, not only for children towards their parents; but for us all towards God's ministers, when they shall tell us what God would have us do; we must submit ourselves and yield, though it turn to our bodily pain and grief; for Isaac yields, though it were to the loss of his life. But alas, who will follow Isaac? For let the minister speak against our carnal pleasure and lawful gain; let him cross our humour and affections, then we refuse to hear and we will not obey. Nay, if the minister of God, as

the Lord's priest, come with the sacrificing knife of God's Word to the throat of our sin, to kill the same in us, that so we may be pure and acceptable sacrifices unto God; do we not resist Him, and say in our hearts, We will none of this doctrine? Or, if he like a prophet of God, come and offer to bind our consciences with the cords of obedience, and to lay our affections on the altar of the law; then we resist, and are either too young, or too old; too rich, or too learned; or too great to be taught and bound to obedience. But let us know that if we will be true Isaacs, even the sons of faith and obedience, and the true heirs of Abraham's faith (as we would bear the world in hand), then as he did submit himself to be bound of his father, so must we yield ourselves to the ministers of God, to be bound by His Word; and suffer the same Word to be in us, the two edged sword of the Spirit, to cut down sin and corruption in us, and to make us new creatures; that so both in body and soul we may become pure and acceptable sacrifices unto our God. This much of the fact itself, wherein Abraham's faith is set forth.

II. Now follow the arguments or reasons whereby the same work of faith is commended unto us.

1. The first argument is taken from the great impediments which might hinder his faith; and they are in number three:

(1) First, that he was brought to this work not by ordinary command, but by an extraordinary course in temptation: Being tempted.

(2) Secondly, that he was to offer his own child; yea, his only begotten son.

(3) Thirdly, that he who had received the promises must offer him and kill him in whom the promise was made.

(1) For the first impediment, in the ordinary translation it is read thus: When he was tried. But that is not so fit, being rather an exposition of the meaning, than a translation of the word. For the very word signifieth to be tempted; and the meaning is, when he was tried. I would therefore rather read it thus: When he was tempted, or being tempted, as the word signifies.

In the handling hereof: (i) first we will intreat of the nature of this temptation, and then (ii) come to the circumstances belonging to the same.

(i) Temptation, as it is here used, may be thus described: It is an action of God, whereby he proveth, and makes experience of the loyalty and obedience of His servants.

(a) First, I say, it is an action of God. This is plain by the testimony of Moses (Gen. 22:1), where (if we read the history) we shall find that God did prove Abraham. Objection: But against this it may be objected that St James saith (James 1:13), that God tempteth no man; and therefore how can temptation be the action of God? Answer: That place in James is thus to be understood: God tempteth no man; that is, God doth not stir up or move any man's heart to sin. Yet further it will be said that temptation is an action of Satan, for so in the gospel we may read (Matt. 4:3), that he is called the tempter. Answer: Some temptations are the actions of God, and some the actions of Satan. God tempteth, and Satan tempteth; but there is a great difference in their temptations; first, in the manner, for Satan tempteth a man to sin against the will of God, and to do some evil; God tempteth a man to do something which shall be only against his own affections or his reason. Secondly, God tempteth for the good of His servants; but Satan tempteth for the destruction both of their bodies and souls.

(b) Again I say, whereby he maketh trial c. Here some will say, God knows every man's heart, and what is in them, and what they will do long before; and therefore He needeth not to make trial of any man. Answer: God makes trial of His servants, not because He is ignorant of that which is in their heart; for He understandeth their thoughts long before; but because He will have their obedience made known; partly to themselves, and partly to the world; so that He makes trial of His servants, not for Himself, but for our sakes.

Now further, God tempteth men three ways:

Firstly, His judgments and calamities in this world; so the Lord saith to the Israelites (Deut. 8:2), Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee this forty years in the wilderness, for to humble thee, for to prove and to know what was in thy heart. That journey might have been gone in forty days, but God did lead them in it forty years, to prove and try by this unwanted calamity, whether they would obey Him or not. So likewise, God suffered false prophets, and dreamers of dreams to come among the people, for this end: to prove them, and to know whether they loved the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul (Deut.13:3). Now this first kind of temptation, by outward judgments, is most grievous, when the Lord layeth His own hand upon His servants so heavily, as they shall think themselves to be quite forsaken. In this temptation was David, as we may read at large in Psalm 6 and 38; and Job being afflicted, not only outwardly in body but inwardly in mind, cryeth out that the arrows of the Almighty were in him (Job 6:4), and through the whole chapter he bewaileth his grievous estate by reason of this temptation.

Secondly, God tempteth his servants by withdrawing His graces from them, and by forsaking them in part; and this temptation is as

grievous as the former; herewith was good king Hezekiah, for as we may read, God left him to a sin of vain glory, and the end was to try him, and to prove all that was in his heart (2 Chr. 32:31).

Thirdly, God tempteth His servants by giving unto them some strange and extraordinary commandment; as in the gospel, when the young man came to our Saviour Christ, and asked Him what good thing he might do to have eternal life (Matt. 19:16). Christ biddeth him, Go and sell all that he had, and give to the poor. This commandment had this use: to be a commandment of trial unto the young man, whereby God would prove what was in his heart, that the same might be made manifest both to himself and unto others. And under this kind we must comprehend this temptation of Abraham; for when God said, Abraham, offer up thy son in sacrifice, it was not a commandment requiring actual obedience (for God meant not that Abraham should kill his son), but only of trial, to see what he would do. And these are God's temptations whereby he proveth His servants.

Yet further, the temptations of God whereby He tempteth His children have two ends:

Firstly, They serve to disclose and make evident the graces of God that be hidden in the hearts of His servants; so St James saith, My brethren, count it exceeding great joy when ye fall into divers temptations (Jam. 1;2). The reason followeth: Knowing that the trial of your faith bringeth forth patience (v.3). Where we see the end of temptation set down: to manifest the gift of patience wrought in the heart. And St Peter saith to the church of God, that they were in heaviness through many temptations, that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth (though it be tried with fire), might be found unto their praise and honour and

glory at the appearing of the Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 1:6,7). Where temptations have this use: to make manifest the soundness of men's faith in God, as the fire doth prove the gold to be good and precious. So in this place, the temptation of Abraham serveth for this end, to make manifest his notable faith and obedience unto God, with a reverent fear of His majesty, as the Lord Himself testifieth saying, Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing for my sake thou hast not spared thy only son (Gen. 22:12). Meaning this: Now I have made thy faith and love and fear of me so manifest that all the world may see it, and speak of it.

Secondly, God's temptations serve to manifest hidden sins and corruptions, partly to a man's own self and partly to the world. And for this end, God tempted Hezekiah. For being recovered of his sickness, after that the king of Assyria his great enemy was vanquished, especially when the ambassadors of the king of Babylon came to inquire of the wonders which were done in the land; God left him, that he might see his sins and the corruptions of his nature, such as pride and vain glory, wherewith he was puffed up at the coming of the ambassadors to him. And thus he, who little thought that pride and vain glory could have taken such hold on him, perceiving how his heart was lifted up in him, was doubtless much humbled at the sight of his so great corruption; for when the prophet came unto him, he submitted himself to the word of reproof (Isa. 39:8).

(a) First, whereas Abraham as the servant of God was tempted, that is, was proved and tried by God Himself; here we are taught that if we persuade ourselves to be the servants of God, as Abraham was, then we must look to have temptations at God's own hand; for his example is a pattern for us; and therefore in him we must see that which we must look to have; for it could not be needful for Abraham,

but it may be also needful unto us. In regard whereof St Peter counteth it a thing necessary that men should fall into sundry temptations, that the trial of their faith might be unto their praise (1 Pet. 1:6,7). So that in this life we must look for trial; and the more glorious our faith is, and the more like to our father Abraham's, the more trials shall we undergo.

(b) Secondly, seeing we must be tried, therefore every one of us must labour for soundness of grace in our hearts; as of faith, repentance, hope and of the love of God (though they be but little in measure); for we must come to trial, and it must appear whether we be hot or cold. Now if we have not soundness of grace in us, in the time of trial, then look, as the dross consumeth in the fire, when as gold cometh out more clear; so shall hypocrisy, formality and all temporary profession, come to nothing in the midst of temptation; when sound grace and a good conscience shall pass through, and shine more pure and perfect after than before.

(c) Thirdly, considering we are to look for trials and temptations from God; therefore we must be careful to remember and practice that counsel of Christ to His disciples before His passion: Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation (Matt. 26:41). And because they were careless in practising this duty, therefore they fell into temptation; especially Peter fell most grievously, by denying his master. We must persuade ourselves that the same commandment is given to us; for God will prove us by temptations, to make manifest the corruptions that be in our hearts; we therefore considering our own estate, we must pray for God's assisting and strengthening grace, that when temptations shall come, we may be found sound and steadfast in the trial.

(ii) Thus much of the nature of Abraham's temptation; now follow the circumstances to be considered therein. And,

(a) First, of the time when Abraham was tempted. Hereof we may read (Gen. 22:1), After these things, saith Moses, God did prove Abraham. The words will admit a double reference. But this I take to be most proper and fit for that place, to wit; that after God had made most excellent promises unto Abraham, and given him most wonderful blessings and privileges, that then He tempted him.

Here we learn this notable lesson: that those people in God's church which receive from God more graces than others, must look for more temptations. This we shall see to be true in Christ Jesus the Head of the church; for when He was baptised, and had received the Holy Ghost (Matt. 3) in the form of a dove, and had this voice of God the Father pronounced upon Him, that He was His well-beloved Son in whom He was well pleased; then presently followeth this, that he was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil (Matt. 4:1), being full of the Holy Ghost, as St Luke saith. So likewise when God had testified of Job that he was an upright and just man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil (Job 1:8), then Satan took occasion thereby to tempt him; as in all the whole course of that book we may plainly see, wherein are set down most wonderful temptations and trials whereby he was proved. So Jacob must wrestle with the Angel (Gen. 32:24,28), and by the power of God, overcome God Himself. This was a notable prerogative, to prevail with the Lord; but yet he must prevail with his foil (v.28), and at the same time, and ever after, draw one of his legs after him, even to his dying day. St Paul was wrapt up into the third heaven, into Paradise, and heard words which cannot be spoken; yea, which are impossible for men to utter; yet lest he should be exalted out of measure through abundance of revelations, there was given unto him a prick in the flesh, the messenger of Satan

to buffet him (2 Cor. 12:7). God will honour him with revelations, but yet Satan shall have leave to buffet and beat him, as it were black and blue. In all which we may see that to whom God vouchsafeth a greater measure of grace, to them he appointeth singular trials and temptations above other men. And the reason is: first, because God's graces do better appear in temptations than out of them, as gold is best tried in the fire and thereby proved most pure and perfect; secondly, temptations serve to abase the servant of God, and to bring him down in his own conceit, that he be not proud of those things that are in him, or puffed up with conceit that there is more in him than indeed there is. This we saw in Paul's example. He was buffeted of Satan, lest he should be exalted with abundance of revelations. We may see a type hereof in worldly affairs; the best ship that floateth on the sea, when it carrieth in it most precious jewels, is ballasted with gravel or sand, to make it take into the water, and so sail more surely, lest floating too high it should be unstable; even so dealeth the Lord with His servants, when He hath given them a good measure of His graces, then doth He also lay temptations upon them, to humble them, lest they should be puffed up in themselves.

(b) The second circumstance to be considered in this temptation is the greatness thereof. It was the greatest that ever was, for ought we read of, that God should command him to kill his own son. For if God had told Abraham that his son Isaac must have died, it would have been very grievous and sorrowful news unto him; and yet more grievous if he had told him that he should have died a bloody death. But yet this was most grievous of all, that Abraham himself with his own hand should sacrifice his own son; nay, his only son; and that which is more, he must kill his only child, in whom the promise was made that in him should his seed be called; this must needs be a great wound unto his heart; and yet to augment his grief, he must not do it presently, nor where he would, but go three days journey into

the wilderness. During which time Satan undoubtedly wrought mightily upon his natural affections to dissuade him from obedience; which could not choose but be far more grievous unto his soul.

Out of the grievousness of this temptation, we may learn this lesson: that God in tempting a man, doth sometime proceed thus far. Not only to cross his sins and corruptions, but even to bring him to nothing, in regard of human reason and natural affections. For this commandment (Abraham, kill thy son) might have made Abraham (if he had consulted with flesh and blood) even distracted in himself, and without reason, not knowing which way to turn himself. And accordingly, let all God's children, especially such as have the greatest graces, look for such temptations, as shall lay their human reason flat upon the ground, and bring them to this point, even utterly to deny themselves.

(c) The third circumstance in this temptation is this: What did Abraham do when he was tempted? The text telleth us that by faith he offered up Isaac, being tempted.

Abraham being thus tempted whether he would obey God's commandment or not; obeys God in offering up his son, and yet lays hold upon God's promise made in him. For we must know that Abraham had a promise of blessing in Isaac; and being now commanded to kill Isaac, he did not now cast off his hope, and desperately think it could not be performed if this commandment were obeyed; but by the great power of faith, he both obeys the commandment and yet still believes the promise; for so saith the text, By faith he offered up Isaac. Therefore in the very action of killing Isaac, he believed the promise that Isaac should live. And this was the excellency of Abraham's faith. For if God should with His own voice bid a man kill his son, it may be that some would be found

that would do it; but to do it, and still to believe a contrary promise made before, betokeneth the virtue of an admirable faith.

In this circumstance we may learn a good instruction: to wit, in all temptations that befall us, still to hold fast to the promises of God; though in the devil's purpose, they tend to the loosening of our hold; and in all common reason, we have good cause to let them go; yet for all that, we must never let go, but still hold the promise fast, and rather let go all reason in the world than God's promise. And this is not only true faith, but even the excellency of faith. For example, God's promise is (John 3:16), God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Now when we are in the extremity of all temptations, we must still hold fast this promise, and venture our souls upon the truth of it. This was Abraham's practice; for in this temptation, God's meaning was to try Abraham, and to see what he would do. Now Abraham, he holds fast the promise, and yet obeys God; though all reason in the earth cannot tell how that promise and that commandment could stand together. But this was Abraham's faith, though I know not, nor reason knoweth not; yet God knoweth; and therefore, seeing I have His commandment, I will obey it; and seeing I have His word and promise, I will believe that also, and never forsake it. And even this must we strive to do in all temptations whatsoever; yea, even in those that come from Satan, which are full of malice and all violence. In our heart and conscience we must still hold and believe the promise of God; and this is ever the surest and safest way to get the victory over Satan: to hold that God's promise shall be performed, though we know not how, but rather see the contrary. And though in human reasoning it be a note of ignorance, and want of skill, to stick always to the conclusion and question; yet in spiritual temptations and trials, this is found divinity: always hold to God's promise, and to

stick fast to that conclusion, and not to follow Satan in his arguments, neither suffer him by any means to drive us from it.

Further, in this fact of offering up Isaac was only Abraham's trial; we may observe that it did not make him just before God, but only served to prove his faith, and to declare him to be just. And therefore when St. James saith (Jam. 2:21), that Abraham was justified through works, when he offered his son Isaac on the altar; his meaning is that Abraham did manifest himself to be just before God, by offering up his son; and not that by this fact Abraham of a sinner was made just; or, of a righteous man, was made more just. For indeed, good works do not make a man just, but only do prove and declare him to be just.

Thirdly, God gave Abraham this commandment: Abraham, kill thy son; but yet he concealed from him what was his purpose and intent herein; for God meant not that Abraham should kill his son indeed, but only to try what he would do; whether he would still believe and obey Him, or not. When we see that God, who is truth itself, reveals to Abraham His will, but not His whole will; whence ariseth this question: Whether it be lawful for a man, according to this example of God, when He tells a thing to another, to conceal His meaning, in whole or in part? For answer hereunto, we must know that there are two extremities, both which must be avoided in this case: 1. That a man must always express all that is in his mind. 2. That in some cases a man may speak one thing and think another, speaking contrary to his meaning. But this latter is no way lawful, and the other is not always necessary. We therefore must hold a mean between both; to wit, that in some cases a man may conceal his whole meaning, saying nothing, though he be examined; namely, when the concealing thereof doth directly stand with the glory of God and the good of his brother.

Thus godly martyrs have done; for being examined before tyrants, where and with whom they worshipped God; they have chosen rather to die than to disclose their brethren; and this concealing of their minds was lawful; because it touched immediately the glory of God and the good of His church.

Thus did Jonah conceal the condition of mercy from the Ninevites when he preached destruction unto them, saying; within forty more days and Nineveh shall be destroyed (Jon. 3:4); though it is evident by the event that it was God's will they should be spared if they did repent. But that condition God would have concealed because it would not have been for the good of the Ninevites to have known it, sith the concealing of it caused them more speedily and carefully to repent.

But out of these cases, a man (being called to speak) must declare the whole truth, or else he sins greatly against God's commandment, forsaking the property of the godly (Psa. 15:2).

And thus much of the first impediment of Abraham's faith.

(2) The second impediment to Abraham's faith is contained in these words:

Offered his only begotten son.

We know that the love of parents descends to every child naturally, but especially to the only begotten; upon whom (being but one) all that is bestowed, which, when there are many, is divided among them. And therefore in all reason, this might greatly hinder Abraham's obedience, that God should command him to offer his son, yea, his only begotten son; but yet faith overcometh this

temptation, breaks through this impediment, and offers up his only son.

Where we note that true faith will make a man overcome his own nature. Love is the strongest affection in the heart, especially from the father to the child, even his only child; and a man would think it impossible to overcome this love in the parent, unless it were by death; there being no cause to the contrary in the child. But yet, behold, Abraham by faith subdued this special love which he bare to his only child; God Himself testified of Abraham, that his love to Isaac was great (Gen. 22:2), and yet by faith he overcometh this his love.

This point is carefully to be marked as declaring the great power of true saving faith; for, if faith can overcome created and sanctified nature, then undoubtedly the power thereof will enable man to overcome the corruptions of his nature and the temptations of the world; for it is an harder thing to overcome our nature which we have by creation, than to subdue the corruption thereof, which comes in by transgression. And hence such excellent things are spoken of faith; it is called the victory that overcometh the world (1 John 5:4). And God is said by faith to purify the heart; faith strengtheneth the heart (Acts 15:9). And through faith we are kept by the power of God unto salvation (1 Pet. 1:5).

Is this the power of faith to overcome nature and the corruption thereof? Then howsoever religion be received, and faith professed generally amongst us, undoubtedly there is little true faith in the world; for even among the professors thereof, how many be there that subdue the sins of their lives, and suppress the works of their wicked nature? Surely very few. Now where corruption beareth sway, and sin reigneth, there sound faith cannot be; for if faith were found

in men, it would purify their hearts, and cleanse the corruptions thereof, and bring forth obedience in life.

Secondly, this power of true faith in man's heart must teach us not to content ourselves with a general faith and knowledge in religion, but to go further, and to get a sound faith that may purify the heart, at least in some true measure, for saving faith will cleanse a man in every part of soul and body, and strengthen his soul in temptations.

Question: Here it may be asked, How can it be truly said that Isaac was Abraham's only begotten son, seeing Ishmael was also his son, and was born before Isaac, as is evident (Gen. 16)? I answer, two ways: first, that Ishmael by God's appointment was put out of Abraham's house, for it was the express commandment of God to put forth the bondwoman and her son (Gen 21:10), and so was made no child of Abraham. Secondly, Ishmael was his child indeed, yet not by Sarah, but by Hagar a bondwoman; and so was (as I may say) base born, whereupon he is reputed for no son; but Isaac is his only begotten lawfully; which may be an item to beware of the bed defiled, seeing such offspring is so debased with the Lord.

(3) Now followeth the third impediment of Abraham's faith; which is also a notable circumstance whereby the same faith is commended; and it is taken from the person of Abraham in these words:

Who had received the promises.

The meaning of the words:

Who. This must be referred to the person of Abraham, of whom the Holy Ghost here speaketh.

Received the promises. That is, by faith; for when God made His promises unto Abraham, he did not only hear them, but (which is the principal point of all) he believed them, and applied the same effectually unto his own soul; so much doth the word received import. Now it is said that he received not one promise, but the promises plurally; for these causes: first, because God having made one main promise unto him touching Christ, did repeat and renew the same divers times. Secondly, because God had made divers particular promises unto him; as first, that He would be his God, and the God of his seed (Gen. 17:7); secondly, that He would give him a child in his old age (Gen. 17:19); thirdly, that unto him and his seed He would give the land of Canaan for ever (Gen. 13:15); fourthly, that in Isaac He would bless all the nations of the earth (Gen. 21:12). And because the receiving of God's promises in general could seem no great impediment to Abraham's work of faith, therefore the Holy Ghost annexeth his receiving of a particular promise in Isaac here in the 18th verse: To whom it was said, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Which might seem impossible to stand with the doing of this work in sacrificing his son; and therefore the consideration of it in Abraham must needs be a great impediment to him in this work; for he goes about to kill Isaac (in obedience to God's command) in whose life he believed to receive the blessings promised of God.

Here then observe a most wonderful impediment to Abraham's faith, which above all might have hindered him from obeying God; for, how could he choose but reason thus with himself: God hath made unto me many gracious promises, and that which is more, he hath said, that in my son Isaac the same must be accomplished; and in him all the nations of the earth must be blessed. Now then, if I shall kill and sacrifice my son, how shall these promises be accomplished? And reason in this case would say, I see no way, but that the promise is gone, and all hope lost. But what doth Abraham in this case? For

all this, he doth sacrifice his son, and that by faith; still believing and holding assuredly that though Isaac were sacrificed and slain, yet in him should all nations of the earth be blessed.

Here then we note this special point, wherein the faith of Abraham doth notably appear: that when Abraham's case, in respect of enjoying the promises of God, might seem desperate, and void of all hope and comfort, then he believeth; for when Isaac was dead, in all reason he could have no hope of the accomplishing of God's promises unto him, because they were made to him in Isaac; Isaac was the man in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed; and yet when all hope is past in man's reason, then good Abraham sets his heart to believe.

This practice of Abraham must be a pattern for us to observe and follow all our lives long, in the matter of our salvation; if it fall out that we shall doubt our salvation, and feel many things in us that would carry us to despair; when we are in this case, and feel no comfort, then let us call to mind Abraham's practice, who believes God's promise, when the foundation thereof is taken away; even so let us do at the same instant, when the promise of God seems to be frustrated, and we have no hope for the accomplishment thereof, that we must cast our souls upon it. For we must not only believe, when we feel comfort in our own conscience concerning God's mercies; but even then when God seems to stand against us, and when we feel in our souls the very gall of hell, then (I say) we must believe.

In Paul's dangerous voyage towards Rome, when he was in the ship with the mariners and centurion, there arose a great tempest, and neither sun nor stars appeared for many days; so that as the text saith, all hope that they should be saved was taken away (Acts 27:20).

Now what saith Paul in this extremity of danger? Now I exhort you to be of good courage; for there shall be no loss of any man's life, save the ship only (v.22), and so persuaded them to take bread. Even so, when our case falls out to be this; that either by reason of sin and of the temptations of Satan, or else by reason of some outward calamities and troubles, we feel our soul (as it were) overwhelmed with sorrow, and even entering into destruction, and can neither see (as it were) light of sun or stars; then we must set before us God's promises, and labour to believe the same. So David being in great affliction and grievous temptation, saith thus of himself (Psa. 77:2,7-10), In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord, my sore ran in the night, and ceased not, my soul refused comfort. Yet at the very same instant he prayed, when his spirit was full of anguish; and though he seemed (as it were) to despair when he said, Will the Lord absent Himself forever? Will He shew no more favour? Is His mercy clean gone? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be merciful? c., yet he checks himself and saith, This is my death and my weakness. Even so, every true member of God's church, in the extremity of all temptations, and in the time of desperation, is bound to believe the promises of God; and indeed, that is the fittest time for faith to shew itself in; for faith (as we have before heard) is the ground of things hoped for, and the subsisting of things which are not seen.

Now, further, it is said, Abraham received God's promises; that is, he applied them to his own soul and conscience, and believed them, and made them his own by faith. This is a notable point, and worthy the marking: God made His promises to Abraham: now Abraham he doth not only hear and learn the promises, but applies them to himself, and by faith makes them his own. And thus ought we to do with all the gracious promises made in Christ. But the manner of our days is far otherwise; for when the merciful promises of God are laid

down unto us in the ministry of the Word, we are content to hear, and (it may be) to learn, and know the same; but where is the man to be found, that will apply them to his own conscience, and by faith make them his own? Men commonly are like unto wayfaring men, or travellers on the sea, that pass by many goodly fair buildings, rich towns and islands; which, when they behold, they admit and wonder at; and so go their way, without making purchase of any of them. And thus deal the most men with God's merciful promises. In the ministry of the Word, God lays open unto them His rich mercies and bountiful promises in Christ; and men approve thereof, and like them well; whereupon many do willingly apply themselves to know the same, but for all this, they will not receive them by faith, and so apply them to their own souls.

But we must take a better course; and when we hear of the promises of God made unto us in Christ, we must not content ourselves with a bare knowledge of them, but labour to believe them, and apply them to ourselves, to our souls and consciences; and so by faith make them our own. As it is said of Abraham, and in him of all the faithful, The blessing of Abraham came on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (Gal. 3:14). Further observe, the Holy Ghost setteth down that particular promise which God made to Abraham in his son Isaac, to whom it was said that in Isaac should his seed be called (Gen. 21:12, Rom. 9:7). In which places it is said, that in Isaac should his seed be called. The meaning whereof is plain and thus much in effect: Ishmael shall not be thy son and heir, but Isaac is the child which shall be thine heir; he it is in whom I will accomplish the promises of life and salvation made to thee.

From the words thus explained,

(a) First we must observe Paul's collection gathered from God's dealing with those two persons (Rom. 9:7), namely, that God before all worlds hath chosen some men to salvation in His eternal counsel, to manifest the glory of His grace; and hath refused and rejected others, leaving them unto themselves, to shew forth His justice upon them.

This doctrine is gathered out of this place, after this manner: Such as is God's practice and dealing toward men in time; such was His eternal counsel and decree (for as God before all time determined to deal with men, so in time He dealeth with them). Now God's practice and dealing with Isaac and Ishmael is this; Ishmael is vouchsafed to be made partaker of temporal blessings; but yet he is cut off from the spiritual covenant of grace; and Isaac is the man that must receive the covenant, and by virtue thereof be made partaker of life everlasting. And so accordingly it is with others; God hath decreed to choose some men to salvation, and these are admitted into the covenant; others He has decreed to reject, and they are cut off from the covenant and from life everlasting. These two persons, Isaac and Ishmael, are types of these two sorts of people whom God doth elect and reject; Isaac representeth those that are chosen to salvation, who become the true members of God's church; and Ishmael is a type of those who are rejected. Now in regard of this different dealing of God with mankind, choosing some and refusing others, we must all put in practice St. Peter's lesson with fear and trembling being very careful, and giving all diligence to make our election sure (2 Pet. 1:10), for all be not elected to salvation, but some are rejected; all be not Isaacs, but some are Ishmaelites. If all were elected and chosen to salvation, then no man need to care for it; but seeing some are rejected, and never vouchsafed to come within the covenant indeed, therefore it standeth us greatly in hand to take the good counsel of the apostle and to give all diligence to make our election sure.

(b) Secondly, whereas it is said, Not in Ishmael, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called; we may we may note the state of God's church in this world in regard of the different sorts of men that live therein. For Abraham's family was God's church in those days, and therein were both Isaac and Ishmael; though both his children, yet far differing in estate before God. Ishmael indeed was born in the church, and there brought up, taught and circumcised; but yet he was without the Covenant in God's sight. Now Isaac was not only born and brought up in the church, and circumcised, but also received into the Covenant; and herein differed far from Ishmael; for he is the son of Abraham in whom God will continue the Covenant of grace unto life everlasting, to his posterity. And so it is with God's church at this day. In it there be two sorts of men; one, which are baptised and brought up in the church, hear the Word and receive the sacraments; but yet are not saved, because they have not the promise of the Covenant effectually rooted in their hearts. The other sort are they which, being baptised in the church, hear the Word effectually and receive the Lord's Supper worthily to their salvation; because God doth establish His Covenant in their hearts. This difference is plain in Scripture, in the parables of the dragnet (Matt. 13), of the sower, and of the tares; as also by Christ's behaviour at the last judgment (Matt. 25:32), severing the sheep from the goats, both which live together in the church. And by St Paul, who speaking of those which are born and brought up in the church, saith that some are children of the flesh, and some children of the promise (Rom. 9:8).

This being so, that every one which lives in the church is not of the church; that is, is not a true member of the church and a true child of Abraham; it must make us all careful to use all holy means whereby we may be fully assured that the Covenant of grace belongs unto us; for it is not enough for us to dwell in the church, to hear the Word, and to receive the sacraments (for so did Ishmael, and yet never was

saved), unless therewithal we have the Covenant of grace belonging to us, and the assurance thereof sealed in our consciences by God's Holy Spirit.

Again, consider who spake these words: But in Isaac shall thy seed be called. We shall find (Gen. 21:12) that it was God Himself. Let it not (saith God unto Abraham) be grievous in thy sight for the child, and for the bondwoman; in all that Sarah shall say unto thee, hear her voice; which was to cast out the bondwoman and her son Ishmael. For (saith God) in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Here observe a notable practice of Abraham, as a good direction how we ought to judge of all those that live in the church, submitting themselves outwardly to the ministry and regimen thereof. Abraham here hath two sons, Isaac and Ishmael; he circumciseth them both, and instructs them both (for he taught all his household to know God, and to fear and obey Him (Gen. 18:19)), he judgeth them both to be in one state in regards of God's Covenant; though they were not; but that difference is made by God. Abraham doth not on his own head, and by his own will, put Ishmael out of the church, which was his family; but God bids him put him out, and then he put him out, and not before; till such time he kept him in, and held him to be within the Covenant, as well as Isaac was. Even so must we deal towards those that live in the church; secret judgment must be left to God; and (till God manifest the contrary) in the judgment of charity, we must hold them all elect. This is the practice of St Paul in all his epistles; writing to Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), he calls them all sanctified; and to the Galatians (Gal. 1:2), he calls them all elect; speaking so in the judgment of charity, although he knew that among them there were many profane and wicked men; and though he reprove many great errors and heinous sins amongst them.

And thus much of the first argument whereby Abraham's faith is commended to us; namely, the great impediments which might hinder the same.

2. Now followeth the second argument or reason whereby his faith is commended; to wit, Abraham's victory over these impediments, or the means whereby he overcame them, and induced himself to obey God in these words:

“accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.” (v.19).

Here is the true cause that made Abraham to offer his son, and yet believe the promise that in him shall his seed be called. We may persuade ourselves that Abraham had rather have died himself (if it might have stood with the will of God) than to have sacrificed his son. How then doth he induce himself to offer him up? Answer: By this which is here set down: he reasoned that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.

Here are divers points to be considered of us:

(1) First, observe that the text saith not that Abraham murmured, or reasoned against God; but reasoned with himself that God was able to raise up his son again; and thereby induced himself to sacrifice his son unto God.

Hence we learn that when God lays upon us any hard commandment, we must not plead the case with God, or murmur against Him; but with all quietness and meekness obey. This is a notable grace of God commended unto us by God Himself: In rest and quietness (saith God, Isa. 30:15) shall be your strength; in quietness and confidence shall ye be saved. Many think it impossible

to endure or do some things which God imposeth on His children; but our spiritual strength stands in these two: in silence, or rest, and in quietness. By these shall we be enabled. When Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded, There went out a fire from the Lord, and devoured them; so they died before the Lord. Now when Aaron their father asked Moses a cause hereof, Moses said, It was that which the Lord spake, He would be glorified in all that came near Him; which when Aaron heard, the text saith, he held his peace, and said not a word (Lev. 10:3); so David behaved himself in the case of distress: I held my peace, and said nothing, because the Lord didest it (Psa. 39:2,9). And this is a special point for us to learn and practice; we must not grudge or repine at God's hard commandments, nor plead the case with Him, but in all quietness and silence obey God in all that He saith unto us.

(2) Again, whereas it is said that Abraham reasoned that God was able to raise him up again; Here we learn that it is a necessary thing for a man that believes, to have good knowledge in God's Word; that when a temptation comes against his faith, by knowledge and reasoning out of God's Word, he may be able to put back the same; for, all our reasoning in matters of faith must be grounded on the Word. So doth Abraham in this place, against this strong temptation, reason out of God's Word to stay himself; so that knowledge in the Word of God is necessary to him that believes. And therefore that doctrine of the church of Rome is erroneous, and here condemned, which saith that if a man become devout, and believes as the church believeth (though he know not what the church believeth), yet this faith will save him; but this is a mere device of their own, and hath no ground in the Word of God; for (as we see here) knowledge in the Word is necessary for him that hath true saving faith.

But what is Abraham's argument whereby he moves himself to obey God? Surely this: He reasoned that God was able to raise up Isaac from the dead. One part of his reason he takes for granted, which he here conceals; for this promise was made unto him: In Isaac shall thy seed be called. Now this he takes for granted: that God will never change His promise. From whence he reasoneth thus: God is able to raise up Isaac my son from the dead to life again; and therefore I will sacrifice my son according to His commandment; for this I know certainly: In Isaac shall my seed be called, seeing God hath promised that, as well as commanded the other.

In this example we see a means set down unto us to induce us to obey God in all hard and difficult cases imposed by God; which is a point to be considered carefully of every one of us. For say that any of us shall be so touched in conscience for our sins that we even despair of our own salvation; what must we do in this case? We must take Abraham's course, and dispute with ourselves for ourselves, and we must draw out arguments from the promise of God, and from the power of God; we must join the promise and power of God together. As for example: thus we must say: God hath made this promise, this I have heard, and I do believe it, that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). This is God's promise, and it shall never be changed. Now therefore howsoever my case be heavy and desolate, yet God is able to comfort me, and to bring my soul out of hell, and from this case of desperation; therefore though He kill me, I will trust in Him, and I will use all holy means whereby I may overcome this hard and grievous temptation. So, if it shall please God to call us to suffer anything for the name of Christ and His holy profession; flesh and blood we know is weak, and nature will make this objection, that life is sweet; what course therefore shall we take? We must do as Abraham here doth; unto the

certainty of God's promise we must adjoin His power, and reason thus: God hath made this promise, that He will be with them that suffer anything for His own name's sake, and I know that He is able to deliver me; and though He will not, yet He can make me able to bear it; therefore I will patiently suffer and abide whatsoever His holy hand shall lay upon me.

(3) Thirdly, is a man so troubled with some sin, that he cannot get out nor overcome it? Then also let him set before him this fact of Abraham; and unfeignedly endeavour to do hereafter. For that which is past, let him labour to believe this promise of God: At what time soever a sinner doth repent him of his sin, He will put all his wickedness out of His remembrance. And for the time to come (being first resolved that God can enable him to leave his sins), let him strive by good means to leave his sin, avoiding the occasion of it and praying against it; and this will be as a cable rope to draw him out of the pit of sin. This course we must take, and this do, in every hard case that shall befall us.

And thus much of the means whereby Abraham induced himself to obey God.

3. The third and last reason whereby Abraham's faith is commended unto us, is the issue and event thereof, in these words:

From whence he received him also after a sort.

From whence: that is, from death. After a sort, or (as may be read) in some shew. This is said because Isaac in the thought and purpose of Abraham, was but a dead man; for Abraham was fully resolved with himself upon God's command to have sacrificed him; yea, he had gone so far as to put the sacrificing knife unto his son's throat, and had slain him indeed, had not the angel of God stayed his hand; and

therefore when the angel said: Lay not thy hand upon the child, neither do anything to him, even then did Abraham in some shew receive Isaac from death.

Here we learn divers points: That whosoever shall rest on God's providence and good pleasure, even in cases of extremity, when he shall be out of all hope with himself, shall at the last have a good issue. This we see to be true by Abraham's example in this place. As we said before, he himself (no doubt) had rather have died ten thousand times than to have Isaac slain, in whom the promise was made; but yet, believing God's promise, that that should never change, he rests himself on God's good pleasure and providence, and goes on in obedience; and so in the end received a blessed issue. This is very clearly set down unto us in the history recorded by Moses. For when Abraham had gone three days journey in the wilderness, and had built an altar, then Isaac said unto Abraham (Gen. 22:7), Father, here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering? Then Abraham said, My son, God will provide Him a lamb for a burnt offering (v.8). And thus yielding himself to God's good pleasure and providence, he received his son again; as a dead child restored to life. So, when we are in cases of extremity, when all goes against us, and when we can see no hope of any good issue or end, and all good means seem to fail us; if we can then cast ourselves on God's providence, and throw ourselves upon God; we shall have comfort in the end, and a good issue out of all. We do all of us in word acknowledge God's providence; but when we come to the pinch, that we fall into cases of extremity, then we sue unlawful means, and do not with Abraham cast ourselves upon God, but seek help of the devil, and wicked men. But all such persons must look for a cursed issue. They therefore that fear the Lord, being put to any plunge or extremity, must cast themselves upon God wholly, and

wait for His good time and pleasure; and then will the issue be both joyous and comfortable unto their souls.

Here some circumstances of this fact are to be considered out of the large story.

(1) The first is this: What did God unto Abraham at this time, when he was about to kill his son? Answer: God now gave him a commandment to stay his hand, and not to slay his son; by virtue whereof, Abraham stayed his hand. God before commanded him to go three days journey in the wilderness, and there to sacrifice his son. Hereupon Abraham goes; but now being come to the place, having bound his son, and being ready to cut his throat; God bids him stay his hand; and then also Abraham obeyeth God, and doth not kill his son. Here we see Abraham is at God's command, and as we say, at his beck. He doth not follow his own will and pleasure, but when God calls, he is wonderfully pliable to do God's command, whatsoever it be, one way or other.

This practice of Abraham must be a looking glass for us, wherein to see what manner of persons we ought to be. Look what God commands us to do, that we must do; and what He forbids us, that we must not do. But this is a rare thing to be found in these days; our practice generally is contrary; for in our lives we follow our own humours and affections, never regarding what God doth either will or nil. But if we will be Abraham's children, we must follow Abraham's practice in this place; For the sons of Abraham will do the works of Abraham (John 8:39). Good servants will come and go, do and undo, at their Lords pleasure; and forget themselves to obey their masters; and so must it be with us, if we call God our good Lord and Master.

(2) The second circumstance to be considered is the time when Abraham received his son from death; to wit, at the very same time when his knife was at his son's throat, and he himself ready to offer him up for a sacrifice unto the Lord; at the same instant God spake unto him by His angel from heaven, and said, Abraham, stay thy hand (Gen. 22:12). This circumstance is worth the marking; for God lets him alone three whole days in great perplexity; and Abraham goes forward according to God's command, even to lay his knife to his son's throat.

Here then we see what is the Lord's dealing with His servants. He lets them alone for a long season in temptation and pitiful distress; and at the length, when it comes even to the extremity, and when the knife is (as it were) at the throat; then He shews Himself, and brings comfort unto them.

The spouse in the Canticles, which is the church of God, or a true Christian soul, whether you will (for it is true both in the general and particular) (Cant. 3:2-4), she seeks Christ everywhere, in the streets and open places, but she finds Him not; then she goes to the watchmen (which are God's ministers) and there enquires after Him whom her soul loved, and they cannot tell her where she might find Him; so that now all hope of finding Him might seem to be past; but when she was a little from them, then she found Him, and Christ comes to her when she was most in fear not to have found Him at all.

The people of Israel were many years in bondage in Egypt; and when the time came that Moses was sent of God to fetch them thence, and to be their guide and deliverer, when he had brought them out, and carried them to the Red Sea, then came Pharaoh with a huge army after them to destroy them (Exod. 14:23). Before, they had been in great affliction and bondage; but now they were quite past all hope of

recovery; for they had before them the Red Sea, and on each side of them great hills and mountains, and behind them the huge host of Pharaoh; and therefore they cried out unto Moses; who then by God's commandment did divide the Red Sea, and made it dry land, and delivered them through the midst of the Red Sea. But as for their enemies, Pharaoh and all his host, the Lord drowned them in the midst thereof.

So for ourselves, when God shall exercise any of us in cases of extremity, we must look to be so dealt withal at God's hand. He will let us alone for a time, and never help us till the pinch; and therefore we must wait for His good pleasure with patience; for this He will do to try us to the full, and to make manifest the graces of God wrought in us.

(3) The third circumstance to be considered is this: In what manner did Abraham receive his son from the dead? This we may read of (Gen. 22;13). He must take a ram that was caught behind him in a bush, and offer him instead of Isaac. So Isaac is saved, and the ram is sacrificed and slain.

Now whereas Abraham offered Isaac in sacrifice to God, and yet Isaac liveth, and the ram is slain in his stead; hence some gather this use, and we may profitably consider of the same; to wit, that the sacrifices which we offer unto God now under the gospel, must be living sacrifices; for Isaac he was offered in sacrifice to God, and yet he lived and died not, but the ram is slain for him. So must we offer ourselves in sacrifice unto God, not dead in sin, but living unto God in righteousness and true holiness. And thus shall we offer up ourselves living sacrifices unto God, whenas we consecrate ourselves unto God's service, and obey Him in our lives and callings. And look as under the law, the burnt offerings were burnt all to smoke and

ashes; so must we in our lives, wholly and altogether, give ourselves unto God, and renouncing ourselves, be nothing to the world, but wholly dedicated to God. Neither must we come unto Him in our sins; for sin makes our sacrifice dead, lame, halt and blind, which God doth abhor; but we must bring ourselves living sacrifices unto God (as St Paul saith, Rom. 12:1). I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you give up your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service of God.

Hence also some gather that this sacrificing of Isaac was a figure and type of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross. For as Isaac was sacrificed and lived, so did Christ, though He died, yet rose again, and now liveth for ever; but because it hath no ground in this place, though it be true which is said of both, therefore I will not stand to urge the same.

And thus much of this third reason whereby Abraham's faith is commended, with the circumstance thereof; and consequently of all the examples of holy Abraham's faith.

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”
Hebrews 11:20.

In the three former verses, the Holy Ghost hath particularly commended the faith of Abraham. Now in this verse, He proceeds to set down unto us the faith of Isaac particularly also. Wherein we are to mark these four points:

- I. First, a blessing wherewith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau;
- II. Secondly, the cause of this blessing, that is, his faith;
- III. Thirdly, the parties blessed, which are Jacob and Esau;
and
- IV. Fourthly, the nature and matter of this blessing, in the end of the verse: Concerning things to come.

Of these in order.

I. First, for the blessing. That we may know the nature and quality of it, we must search out the kinds of blessings how many they be. In God’s Word, we find three kinds of blessings:

1. First, whereby God blesseth man. Now God blesseth man by giving unto him gifts and benefits either temporal or spiritual; and so He blessed all His creatures in the beginning, but especially man.
2. The second kind of blessing is that whereby man blesseth God; and this man doth by praising God, and giving thanks unto Him, who is the author of all blessings. So St Paul saith, Blessed be God, even

the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ (Eph. 1:3), beginning his epistle with this kind of blessing, that is, by praising God. And so Zachariah after the birth of his son and the receiving of his sight, he sings unto God this song of praise: Blessed be the Lord of Israel (Luke 1:68), that is, praise and thanksgiving be unto the Lord c.

3. The third kind of blessing is that whereby one man doth bless another; and under this kind we must understand Isaac's blessing in this place.

Now further, this kind of blessing whereby one man blesseth another, is either private or public.

(1) A private blessing is that whereby one private man whatsoever he be in his place, prays to God for a blessing upon another. And this is common to all men; for every man may bless another, that is, pray to God for a blessing upon another; but especially it belongeth to parents thus to bless their children, by praying to God for a blessing upon them. And therefore the commandment goes thus: Honour thy father and thy mother, that they may prolong thy days in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Exod. 20:12). Now parents prolong their children's days by blessing them; that is by teaching and instructing them in religion, and by praying unto God for a blessing upon them, that He would bless them.

(2) Secondly, there is a public kind of blessing, which is done by the minister of God, in the name of God. And after this sort Melchizedek blessed Abraham as he returned from the slaughter of the kings (Heb. 7:1), and without all contradiction (saith the author of this epistle), the less is blessed of the greater (v.7). Further, these public kinds of blessings are of two sorts: either ordinary or extraordinary. An ordinary kind of public blessing is that which is pronounced and

uttered out of God's Word by an ordinary minister upon the people. Example of this we have in the ordinary priests of the Old Testament; whose duty was in the service of God, to bless the people before their departing. And the form of blessing which they should use is prescribed unto them by Moses, after this manner from the Lord: Thus shall ye bless the children of Israel, and say unto them: The Lord bless thee, and keep thee, the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be merciful unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace (Num. 6:24-26). Where we see the manner of the priest was to bless the people, not in his own name, but in the name of God, stretching out his hand over the heads of the people.

(i) This kind of blessing was then ordinary, and yet some way figurative; signifying unto them the blessings which Christ Jesus the Mediator, God and man, should not only pronounce, but even give unto the church in the New Testament; which our Saviour accordingly performed to His disciples at His ascension. For the story saith, when He was risen again, He led them to Bethany (where he ascended) and lift up His hands and blessed them (Luke 24:50). And St Paul declareth this blessing of Christ more at large, saying (Eph. 4:8,11,12), Christ ascended on high, and led captivity captive, and gave gifts for men; some to be apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the gathering together of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edification of the body of Christ. Where we see that our Saviour Christ did not only pronounce a blessing upon His church, but was also the author thereof from God His Father. And as the priests in the Old Testament had an ordinary kind of blessing for the people; so the ministers of God in the New Testament, they have the same in substance; for the ministers may bless their people two ways: first, by praying unto God for them; and secondly, by pronouncing a blessing

upon them, according to God's holy Word. A form of this blessing we have from the apostle Paul, who blessed the Corinthians after this sort: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all (2 Cor 13:14).

(ii) Secondly, an extraordinary kind of blessing is when an extraordinary prophet, or servant of God, doth sit down and pronounce a blessing unto any, and foretelleth their estate from God. Thus did Noah bless his two sons Shem and Japheth (Gen. 9:25-27), and pronounced a curse upon Canaan. This he did, not as an ordinary father, but as an extraordinary prophet, not only praying for a blessing upon his two sons, but also foretelling them what should be their condition or estate afterward. So in this place, whereas Isaac blesseth Jacob and Esau, it is no private blessing, but a public; and yet indeed, not an ordinary public blessing, but extraordinary, by telling unto Jacob and Esau beforehand what should be their particular estates and conditions, and what blessings they should have from God, both in this life, and in the life to come. For we must not here conceive of Isaac as an ordinary father, but as a holy patriarch and prophet of the Lord, and an extraordinary man; foreseeing and foretelling by the spirit of prophecy, the particular estate of his two sons; and also what particular blessings they and their posterity should receive from God.

The meaning of these words Isaac blesseth Jacob and Esau is this: that Isaac being a prophet, an extraordinary man and a famous patriarch, did by the spirit of prophecy foretell and set down, and tell beforehand, what should be the particular estate of his two sons, Jacob and Esau; and as he did foretell it, so likewise he prayed unto God that the same might come to pass; as it did afterward. And thus much for the meaning.

Now though this were an extraordinary kind of blessing which Isaac used; yet from hence we may all of us learn an ordinary duty; for look as Isaac blessed his two sons, so we by his example must learn to abstain from all wicked speeches, as cursing and banning, and exercise our tongues in blessing, nor making them the instruments of sin to curse and revile, as many do; for vengeance is mine, saith the Lord (Rom. 12:19). He must curse that hath absolute power and authority to inflict the same when He will. But we are not absolute lords over any man, nor any creature; and therefore we must remember St Peter's lesson (1 Pet. 3:9), we must not render evil for evil, nor rebuke for rebuke; but contrariwise bless; and he rendereth a reason, knowing that we are thereunto called to be heirs of blessing. Far be it from us therefore to open our mouths to curse either men or any of God's creatures; and indeed vile and abominable is the practice of many, who exercise their tongues in cursing and banning, not only men, but also other creatures of God. But let such as fear God both learn and practice the contrary.

II. The second point to be considered is the cause of this blessing, to wit, Isaac's faith: By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau.

1. Here first we are to consider how Isaac's faith blessed Jacob and Esau. Surely thus: He did most notably gather together all the promises of God made to him, and to his two children, which were specially three: first, I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed; secondly, God had promised that he and his seed should possess the land of Canaan; and thirdly, that his two children should be two mighty nations, and that the elder shall serve the younger.

Now Isaac doth not consider these blessings apart one from another, but hath them all in memory; and on them all (receiving them by a lively faith) he builds his blessings; for by faith in these promises, he

did certainly foresee what should be the future estate of his two sons, and accordingly doth he pronounce particular blessings upon them both.

But it may be thought that Isaac did not bless his sons by faith; for if we read the history in Genesis, we shall see that he blessed them by error and was deceived therein; for he was purposed to have blessed Esau only with the special blessing, when as he gave the same to Jacob unwittingly; how then could he do this by faith? For the answering of this, we must consider two things: first, it is true indeed that Isaac was blinded overmuch with a fond affection toward Esau, and loved him otherwise than he ought, and therefore was purposed to have blessed Esau with the special blessing. This was a fault in Isaac; but yet it takes not away Isaac's faith, nor makes it to be no faith; but it shews that Isaac's faith was weak, and joined with some infirmity in forgetting God's particular promises. Secondly, howsoever at the first Isaac erred in his purpose for the blessing of his children, yet afterwards he corrects himself for it. For as we may read in the history, after he had indeed blessed Jacob, supposing it had been Esau, when Esau came for his blessing with his venison, the text saith that Isaac was stricken with a marvellous great fear, and said, I have blessed him, and therefore he shall be blessed (Gen. 27:33); correcting his fault in his former purpose; yea, and though Esau sought it with tears, yet he could not move Isaac to repent himself of blessing Jacob (Heb. 12:17). Wherefore it is undoubtedly true that he gave these blessings unto his children by faith.

2. Now from this, that Isaac blessed his children by faith, we learn many instructions.

(1) The first concerneth parents; that howsoever they cannot like Isaac did, like prophets and patriarchs, pronounce blessings upon

their children, and foretell what shall be their particular estate afterward; yet if parents would as far as they may, follow the practice of Isaac, they should bring great comfort and consolation to their own souls, both in this life and in the life to come.

Isaac set before his eyes all the promises that God had made both concerning him and his sons, and by faith in these promises, is moved to bless his children; so if parents would have true comfort in their children, they must search through the whole book of God, and see what promises God hath made unto the godly and to their seed; and withal, they must by faith apply unto their own souls, all these gracious promises, endeavouring also to make their children to know the same, and to walk worthy thereof; and then as their obedience shall increase, so will their joy increase, not only in God, but mutually one in another. This will stay their hearts in all assaults, yea, even in death itself.

(2) Secondly, whereas Isaac blessed his children by faith; here we may take just occasion to speak of such wicked persons as are commonly called blessers; who are too much esteemed of by many at this day, and their wicked practices counted blessings, and good means of help, when as indeed they are most vile and wretched creatures. This may be thought a hard censure, because they are taken for cunning men and women, and for good people, following Isaac's example in blessing men's children and cattle; they are thought to do no harm at all, but much good, by helping strange mischances that befall men in their bodies, children or goods. Thus would some excuse and defend these wizards and blessers, who are the wretched limbs of the devil; but let us know that if they will bless aright, it must be by faith. Now what faith have they? Hath God made any promise to them, that by their means he will help those that come to seek help at them for their children and cattle? Nay

verily, there is no such matter; God never made promise to any such; nay, He hath flatly forbidden, not only such practices as they use, but also for men to seek to any such persons; and therefore they cannot bless men's children and cattle by faith. But they say they do these things by faith; yet it is by faith in the devil and in his promises. For this is certain, that as God hath his laws and sacraments for those that enter covenant with Him; so on the contrary the devil hath words, spells and charms as his laws and rites, wherein he exerciseth his slaves; and by a satanical faith in the devil's word and promise, do these wizards and wise-women bless men's goods and children. This is true by the common confession of many of them, to omit all other proof. And therefore we must hold them for the limbs of the devil, and his wicked instruments to draw men from God; and so in no case go to them for help; for in so doing, we forsake the living Lord and his help, and seek for help at the devil; than which what can be more odious? But say we receive some outward help by their means; yet mark the issue; the Lord hath said (Lev. 20:6), If any turn after such as work with spirits, and after soothsayers; to go awhoring after them, then will I set my face against that person; and will cast him off from among his people. Therefore unless we fear not the curse of God, we must be warned hereby not to seek help at their hands. For they are graceless people, who have no fear of God before their eyes; but they set themselves against God and His Word. And indeed these common blessers which seem to do no hurt, but to bless men's children and cattle, are more dangerous than notorious witches, who can only hurt men's bodies and goods, when God permits; whereas these blessers ensnare the soul, and draw whole towns and countries to the approbation and partaking of their wickedness.

III. The third point to be considered is the parties blessed, that is, Jacob and Esau. Here mark first the order which the Holy Ghost

useth: He setteth Jacob in the first place, and yet Esau was the elder brother. What is the reason for this? Answer: We must know that the Scripture useth a threefold order in the naming of persons:

1. The order of nature, as when the firstborn is put first. And thus David's sons are numbered according to their age; first Ammon, then Daniel, the third Absalom etc.

2. The order of dignity, whenas those are put in the first place, not which are the eldest, but which are the best and most in God's favour. This order the Holy Ghost uses in naming Noah's sons (Gen. 5:32), saying, Noah begat Shem, Ham and Japheth; whenas Japheth was the eldest, and by order of nature should have been put first; yet with Shem God continued the covenant.

3. The order of history, when as one that is first, or chief in dignity, is placed last because his history begins in the last place. So our Saviour Christ is mentioned last in the genealogy made by St Matthew, because His history began in the last place, though in dignity He were first and principal. To apply this to our purpose; the order which the Holy Ghost here useth, is not the order of history, or of nature, but of dignity; because Jacob was chief in favour of God, therefore the Holy Ghost putteth him in the first place.

Here then we see in this order of dignity, that the first blessing (of life everlasting) belongs to Jacob; Esau must have his blessing, but in the second place.

Here observe these two things:

(1) First, Jacob is received into God's covenant, and Esau put by; Jacob gets the principal blessing, and Esau loseth it; but what? Are these things so for Jacob's desert, or for the default of Esau? Nay

verily; the good pleasure of God is the chief cause hereof; for as touching the blessing, if we read the history, we shall see that Esau at his father's commandment went and hunted, and took pains, and got his father's venison, and told him nothing but truth. But Jacob never went to hunt, but gets a kid dressed, and comes to his father with it, and while he talks with his father doth foully gloss and lie; so that in all reason it might seem that Esau deserved the better blessing; yet God will have it otherwise, and the principal blessing belongs to Jacob. Wherein we may note that God's special love to a man, whereby He receives him into His covenant, is not grounded on man's behaviour, but on His own good will and pleasure.

(2) Secondly, in that Jacob here had the principal blessing; we learn that the counsel of God doth overrule the will of man. For father Isaac had purposed to have blessed Esau with the chiefest blessing; but yet God's counsel was contrary, and the same overrules Isaac's will. For though Isaac had cause to suspect that it was not Esau, both because he came so soon, and also for that the voice was apparent not to be Esau's, but Jacob's voice; yet God's counsel overruled his will; and when he came to handle his son's hands, he could not discern between a kid's skin and the skin of a man; what is the cause hereof? Surely it was God's will and counsel that Jacob should have the chiefest blessing; and therefore he overrules Isaac's will, and blinds his senses, and makes him to bless Jacob with the chiefest blessing.

The consideration hereof is profitable unto us; for it is a received opinion with many at this day, that God did purpose to save all men. Now when question is made, Why then are not all men saved? They answer, because men will not, though God will. But this opinion is erroneous, for it makes man's will to overrule God's counsel; as if they should say, God willeth it not because men will it not; or else

(which is worse) God willeth it, but it cometh not to pass because men will not do it. But God's will and counsel is the highest and chiefest cause of all; and look whatsoever He willeth, that bringeth He to pass; and because all men are not saved, therefore we may safely think and say that God did never decree to save all men.

1. Now further, more particularly of Jacob's blessing:

(1) First it may be asked, How could Jacob be blessed, seeing he came dissemblingly and lying to his father? Answer: We must know that howsoever Jacob sought the blessing by fraud, yet he might be blessed; for he failed not, neither did amiss in seeking the blessing, but only in the manner of seeking it; it was his duty to seek it, though not after that manner which he did; he should rather have stayed that leisure and time wherein God had caused Isaac to bless him, without his sin in seeking it.

(2) Secondly, consider the manner how Jacob receives his father's blessing; namely, in his elder brother Esau's garment.

Here we may see a notable resemblance of God's manner of blessing us: When we look for a blessing at God's hand, we must not come in our own garments, in the rotten rags of our own righteousness; but we must put on Christ's garment, the long white robe of His righteousness. And so coming unto God, as Isaac said of the savour of Esau's garments which Jacob had put on (Gen. 27:27,28): Behold, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field; God give thee therefore of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of wheat and wine; so will God say to us that the righteousness of Christ, which we have put on by faith, is a sweet smelling savour in His nostrils (Eph. 5:2). Now seeing all the blessings that we enjoy come to us in Christ, and our acceptance with God is in His righteousness; we therefore must labour to put on Christ every day,

by becoming new creatures; we must seek to resemble Him in knowledge, righteousness and holiness; so shall our assurance of God's blessings increase upon us more and more.

(3) Lastly, mark that howsoever Jacob was blessed otherwise than Isaac had purposed; yet after the blessing is pronounced, it must needs stand; for so when Esau came, Isaac said unto him, I have blessed Jacob; therefore he shall be blessed (Gen 27:33). Even so, the ministers of God's Word, in the assembly of the church, who have power to pronounce God's blessings upon the people; howsoever they be but weak men, and may be deceived, being subject to error as other men are; yet when they pronounce God's blessing upon their congregation in the ministry of the Word; if they do it in sincerity of heart and uprightness of conscience, that blessing shall stand. And so on the contrary, look whom they curse for just cause out of God's Word, their curse shall stand. Further, as Isaac blessed, but knew not whom; so the ministers of God in the dispensation of the Word, they must bless God's people, though they know not who they are particularly that do receive it.

2. Thus much of Isaac's blessing Jacob. Now I come to his blessing of Esau; for he also was blessed, as the text saith; yet in the second place, though he were the elder brother.

Question: How could Esau be blessed at all, seeing Isaac had but one blessing? Answer: Esau was only blessed with temporal blessings, and not with spiritual.

Objection: But some will say, Esau was a bad man, and wicked; now it is said that to the impure, all things are impure (Tit. 1:15); how then could the bestowing of temporal things be blessings to him? Answer: Temporal things bestowed on the wicked are blessings, and no blessings. They are blessings in regard of God that gives them; but

they are no blessings in regards of men that receive them and use them amiss.

Question: How came it to pass that Esau, being the elder brother, loseth his birthright and blessing both. How came it to be Jacob's?

Answer: The cause was his profaneness, as we may see and read in the next chapter, where it is said (Heb. 12:16) that he sold his birthright for a portion of meat, even for a mess of red broth; and being so profane as to condemn so high an honour, he must be content to have his blessing in the second place. And hence we may observe a good instruction.

There is many a young man in these our days baptised, as Esau was circumcised, and living in the church, as he did in Isaac's house; who, during the prime of his youth, is given to nothing but to his pleasure; that is as good to him as Jacob's red broth was to Esau. Take that pleasure from him, and take away his life; herein is all his joy, and he delighteth in nothing so much as to spend his time in hunting, hawking, dicing, gaming, wantonness, and drinking. Now know for certain, this is a right Esau; and yet many such have we among us, who think of themselves, that they are the jolly fellows, and they only carry the brave mind; but as for Jacob, and such as make conscience of their ways and word; those alas are silly fellows. Now what is to be said or thought of these? Surely this: If they do not (and in that time) look to their estates, and to themselves, it will cost them their lives, even the life of their souls. Esau lost his birthright by his profaneness; and so will these men do if they continue in this estate; they will blot their names out of the book of life, and root themselves quite out of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore let all young men whatsoever they be, high and low, take heed how they live in sin, and go on in their wickedness; for if they take Esau's course, and continue in profaneness, doubtless they will have Esau's

end. How wonderfully doth Satan bewitch them, that while they go on in sin, they should think so highly of themselves, and so basely of those that make conscience of their ways. Wherefore in the fear of God let such betime redress their ways and courses; lest when God's curse is upon them, they cry too late for mercy. And thus much of the parties blessed.

IV. The fourth point to be considered is the nature or matter of this blessing, in the end of the verse: Concerning things to come.

The meaning of these words is this: That old Isaac their father did pronounce blessings upon his sons, not only for the time present, but for the time to come; in blessings temporal and spiritual (as we may read, Gen. 27:28,39), where he giveth to them both the fatness of the land, and plenty of wheat and wine; and especially to Jacob, that he should be lord over his brethren. But some will say, it will seem to prove otherwise; for while Jacob lived, he was always humble and subject to Esau; and when he came to his own country from among the Aramites, as he met with Esau, he sent presents to him; and when he saw him, he went before, and bowed himself to the ground seven times; until he came near unto his brother (Gen. 33:3). Answer: That prophecy of Jacob and Esau, that the elder should serve the younger, must not be restrained to the persons of Jacob and Esau, but referred to their posterity; especially in the days of David and Solomon; for then were the Edomites, who came out of Esau, in subjection to the Israelites, the posterity of old Israel. Whereupon David, speaking as a king, saith (Psa. 60:8), Moab shall be my washpot; over Edom will I cast my shoe; meaning thereby that he would bring the posterity of Esau into a base and low estate of subjection unto him; according as we may see verified (2 Sam. 8:14).

But some will say that Isaac when he blessed Esau, pronounced that he should have a fertile soil, and the fatness of the earth should be his dwelling place (Gen. 27:39); whereas in Malachi the Lord saith (Mal. 1:3), He hated Esau, and token thereof was this: that he had made his mountains waste, and his heritage a wilderness for dragons; meaning that he should dwell in a barren land. How can these two agree? Answer: First, we may say thus: That the land of Edom was a fertile land; but yet in respect of the land of Canaan, but a barren and waste land. Secondly, Isaac speaks here of Idumea, as it was in his time; not as it was afterward; for it might be fertile in Isaac's time, and yet after become barren; for God will curse a land by turning fruitfulness into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein (Psa. 107:34).

And thus much for the example of Isaac's faith. Now follow the examples of the faith of Jacob.

“By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.” Hebrews 11:21.

In these words the Holy Ghost lays down the notable and worthy example of Jacob’s faith; which is here commended by two actions:

I. First, his blessing of the two sons of Joseph;

II. Secondly, his adoring or worshipping of God.

I. In the first action, consider these points:

1. The blessing itself;

2. The circumstances belonging to the same. As:

(1) The time when Jacob blessed them, that is, when he was dying;

(2) Secondly, by what means he did bless them, namely, by faith;

(3) Thirdly, the parties blessed, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Of these in order.

1. First, for the blessing. Of this kind of blessing we entreated in the former verse in the example of Isaac’s faith; and therefore need not now repeat the same. Only this we must remember, that this blessing of Jacob is not the common or ordinary blessing of a father, but the

extraordinary blessing of an holy patriarch and prophet of God. The blessing itself stands in three things:

(1) Jacob makes the sons of Joseph his own sons, adopting them and taking them into his family. And this is the meaning of those words in Genesis where Jacob saith as he is blessing them, Let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 48:16), that is, they shall be received into my family, and be my children, called after my name.

(2) He gives them two portions in the land of Canaan; for Jacob was made an instrument of God by way of prophecy to distinguish and divide the land of Canaan among his children.

(3) He doth as a prophet, by the spirit of prophecy, foretell the condition and estate of Ephraim and Manasseh in their posterity; to wit, that they should be great nations, and of them should come two great people.

In these three things doth Jacob's blessing consist.

Out of this blessing of Jacob we learn two things:

(1) First, that God alloweth this liberty to a master of the family, to adopt and choose for the upholding of his house, a child or children, in the want of an issue from his own body. For here old Jacob for the continuance of his posterity, and the enlarging of the church of God, adopteth his own son's sons into his own family, to be his own sons; and this he doth by faith. And therefore a lord and master in his family may do the like; but yet with this caveat: he must ever take heed that in this adopting he do not unjustly hinder his own issue or kindred.

(2) Again, whereas Jacob blessed these two sons of Joseph, by foretelling the particular estate of their posterity, for their portion in the land of Canaan; here we learn that in many things God doth vouchsafe to reveal His will and counsel in a special manner unto them that be His children; as in this place he revealeth unto Jacob the particular estate of the two sons of Joseph. In like manner, when God was to destroy the Sodomites; Shall I hide (saith the Lord) from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall be indeed a mighty nation? For I know him that he will command his sons and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord (Gen. 18:17-19). And the prophet Amos saith (Amos 3:7), Surely the Lord will do nothing but he will reveal His secrets to His servants the prophets. So saith our Saviour Christ to his disciples, Ye are my friends; and He giveth a reason, because (saith He) I have revealed unto you all that I have heard of my Father (John 15:15). So that those which are (in Christ) the friends of God, they shall in a particular and special manner know those things which God will not reveal unto others. And look as this is here verified to Jacob in a special manner, so it is true generally in all God's servants and children; he revealeth some particular things unto them, more than he doth unto others. For besides that general knowledge which they have in His Word, He reveals particularly unto them the knowledge of their own election, of their justification, sanctification and glorification to come; though not by way of prophecy, yet by the working of His Spirit in the ministry and meditation of His Word.

2. And thus much of the blessing. Now follow the circumstances.

(1) The first circumstance to be considered is the time when Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph; noted in these words: When he was dying, that is, being ready to die, not in the act of dying.

In this circumstance we may learn two especial duties: (i) one for masters of families, (ii) the other for ministers of God's Word; for here Jacob bears the person not only of a father, but of a prophet.

(i) First, masters of families are here taught to set in order their houses and families whereof they have charge before they die; for Jacob, having a great charge and many children, calls for the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, before his death, and makes them his own, to perfect his family.

Question: How (will some ask) must a man set his house in order when he dies? Answer: By doing two things after Jacob's example; for first, he disposeth of his temporal things, and distributeth his temporal inheritance in the land of Canaan. Secondly, he gives them charge of some duties concerning himself, and some others, especially concerning religion and God's worship, and then he dies; and it is said, When he had made an end of giving charge unto his sons, he plucked up his feet into his bed and gave up the ghost (Gen. 49:33). So likewise, masters of families, they must set their houses in order by the like of two duties: (a) By a due disposing of their temporal goods and possessions; and (b) By giving exhortation and charge unto their children and family concerning the worship of God and the practice of true religion. This (as we may also read in 1 Kings 2) was the practice of good king David; when he was about to die, and as he saith, to go the way of all flesh, he calls for Solomon his son, and makes him king in his stead, and gives him a most notable charge concerning God's worship (v.3). Read the place, it is worth the marking. So the prophet speaks when he comes to Hezekiah from the Lord, he aims at these two; and bids him set his house in order, for he must die and not live (Isa 38:1); and so ought every master of a family, after their example, both learn and practice these two duties.

(ii) Secondly, God's ministers must hence learn their duty; for Jacob was a notable minister and prophet in God's church, which was then his family. Jacob he blessed the sons of Joseph, that he might receive them into his family, and into the covenant; that so he might continue and preserve the church of God after his death; for look as Isaac his father did call him into the covenant and blessed him, so dealeth he with the two sons of Joseph. And accordingly every minister of God, in his place, ought to have special care to convey and derive true religion, and the gospel of Christ from hand to hand, so much as they can while they live; that so after their death it may be published and maintained. In the New Testament we have a worthy commandment for this purpose; St Paul having instructed and taught Timothy in the ways of godliness and religion, chargeth him that what things he had heard and learned of him, the same he should deliver to faithful men, which should be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2); that so God's gospel and religion going on from hand to hand, and from person to person, might increase from time to time. St Peter's practice herein was notable (2 Pet. 1:15), I will endeavour therefore always, that ye may be able to have remembrance of the things of God after my departure; having professed before that while he lived he would stir them up by putting them in remembrance (v.13). And in like sort, all God's faithful ministers must do their whole endeavour before they die, that the gospel may be preached when they are gone.

(2) Second circumstance. By what means did Jacob bless the two sons of Joseph? Answer: By faith in the promises of God; so the text saith, By faith Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph. And if we consider the matter well, we shall see it was a notable faith; for he was now a poor pilgrim in Egypt, and yet by faith gives them portions in the land of Canaan,

Question: Why (will some say) did he not keep himself in the land of Canaan? Answer: Jacob indeed dwelt there for a time, but yet as a sojourner, having no more liberties than he bought for himself; no not so much as water for his camels, or a place to bury the dead; and besides, he was driven out of this his own land by famine, and was fain to fly into Egypt for food and sustenance; and there to live as a poor pilgrim and stranger, forth of his own country; and yet for all this extremity (as though he had been some mighty potentate of the world, or some emperor) he makes his will, and bequeathes unto his children the land of Canaan, allotting to everyone his part and portion; which must needs be a work of a notable faith, wonderfully apprehending and applying the promise of God.

In his example we are taught a notable duty in the matter of our salvation; whenas any of us (by reason of the rigorous temptation of sin and Satan, and by their assaults) shall seem to ourselves to be (as it were) thrust out of our inheritance in the heavenly Canaan, what must we do? We must not despair; but even then set before our eyes, and call to remembrance the promises of God made unto us in Christ, concerning life everlasting; and thereon we must rest and stay ourselves. Then let temptations assault us, and drive us whither they can; still we must hold fast the promise with both hands of faith; and above hope, by faith appoint and design unto ourselves, a part and portion in the kingdom of heaven. And so doing, we shall be true Israelites, and true followers of this faithful patriarch; who by faith (beyond all likelihood) allots the land of Canaan to his posterity.

(3) Third circumstance. The parties whom he blessed; namely, the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim. Hereof we may read at large (Gen. 48:8ff.), where among many things, observe this one: Joseph brings his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim, unto Jacob his father, that he might bless them as he lay on his bed. Now Joseph's

mind was that Manasseh (the elder) should have the chiefest blessing; and therefore he set Manasseh at Jacob's right hand, and Ephraim (the younger) at his left. But Jacob being to bless them, putting his right hand on Ephraim's head, and the left on the head of Manasseh; whereby he gave the birthright (which was a principal prerogative) unto Ephraim, contrary to Joseph's desire. Unto Manasseh he gave a blessing also, but far inferior to Ephraim's. Now here we may not think that Jacob did this upon any fond affection (as parents oftentimes do, because they love one child better than another) but he did it after a special manner; by the direction and instinct of God's Spirit, which so appointed it. For, when Jacob blessed them, he knew not (of his own knowledge, by the benefit of his senses), which was Ephraim and which Manasseh. Again, look as Jacob gave the blessing at this time, the principal unto Ephraim, and the lesser to Manasseh; so afterwards they came to pass. For (as we may read) the tribe of Ephraim was far more populous and more glorious than the tribe of Manasseh. And therefore, in the books of the prophets (Hos. 4:17, 5:9, 6:3 c.) we shall find that the name of Ephraim is given to all the ten tribes; and they are called by that name because it was the most noble tribe of all, and the most valiant, and (as it were) the shelter of all the rest. Yea, further, of this tribe came (1 Chr. 7:27) Jehoshua, that noble captain; and (1 Kin. 11:26) Jeroboam and many other mighty kings of Israel.

Where we may learn that God is the disposer of honours and dignities in this world. He giveth those to whom He will, to some more, and to some less, as pleaseth Him; yea, sometimes he raiseth up men of base and low degree to great dignity; as David saith (Psa. 113:7), He raiseth the needy out of the dust, and lifteth the poor out of the dung. Now whence comes this? Is their hearing, their great strength, their beauty, or wonderful skill and knowledge, the cause of their preferment? or the wealth of their parents, or anything in

them? No surely; if we speak of the first cause, we see in this example that the preferment of Ephraim above Manasseh was for no cause in Ephraim; for what was in Ephraim that was not in Manasseh, when Jacob blessed them? Surely nothing; for he was but a child as the other was, and a younger child also; but he was preferred by reason of God's good will towards him. And so it is with all those that are advanced to preferment in this world. Wherefore, seeing honour and dignity cometh not from themselves, or anything in them; therefore they must not ascribe it to their own wit, learning, strength or friends; but wholly to the gift of God as the first cause; and so must labour to use it to the honour of Him that only gives it, of His good pleasure; else they sacrifice to their own net (Hab. 1:16).

Question: Why doth the Holy Ghost in this place put Joseph's name down, who was not blessed, and conceal the names of the two children that were blessed? Answer: If we read the history in Genesis, we shall see the reason hereof. For, when Joseph heard that his father Jacob was sick; though he was a mighty prince and a noble potentate among the Egyptians, and his father but a poor pilgrim; yet he comes to his sick father before his death, and brings his two sons with him, to have his father to bless them before he died; and therefore the Holy Ghost here nameth Joseph, to shew unto us what respect he had of his father's blessing; he made more account thereof, and did more esteem it, that so he might have his sons within the covenant, than of all the kingdoms of the world; and therefore he brings them both to his father to be blessed, a little before his death.

Now look what mind and affection Joseph bears, the same should be in every one of us. Whatsoever our estate be, whether honourable, or base and mean; we must with Joseph esteem more of God's covenant, and to be members of God's church, than of all the honour

in the world besides; and we must esteem our place and preferments that we have, or our children may have, to be nothing in comparison of the blessing of God and His favour. Yea, we must choose with Joseph rather to leave our honours and dignities for a time, or (if it were) for ever, than to lose the blessing of God's grace; and blessed shall those fathers be with Joseph, who had rather have their children blessed of God than advanced in the world.

II. The second action of Joseph's faith is in these words: And worshipped on the end of his staff.

And it is a notable work for the commendation of his faith. But before we come unto it, there are certain questions which may profitably be considered, as,

1. First, for the translation, how the words should be read. The papists read them thus: and adored the top of his rod; that is (say they), the top of Joseph's sceptre who came to visit him. From whence they would gather and ground their abominable idolatry, in the adoration of creatures, and namely, of holy things, as crucifixes, relics, images, and also of God at and before such holy things. But we must know that their translation is false and erroneous, and cannot be justified. Howsoever they may bring some men's witness and testimony for the same. For in reading it thus, and adored the top of his rod; they leave out a substantial word of the text, to wit, this word upon; whereby they corrupt the text, and deprave the meaning of the Holy Ghost.

Again, their observation and collection hence is most abominable; for to worship an image or other holy thing, or God Himself in or at the same, is flatly forbidden in the second commandment, Thou shalt not make to thyself and graven image.... Thou shalt not bow down to them. But our translation in this place is true and right, according to

the words of the text and the meaning of the Holy Ghost, that he worshipped upon the end of his staff.

2. Yet further there may be a question moved about the words; for if we read the history in Genesis, it is there said that Jacob worshipped towards the end or top of his bed (Gen. 47:31).

Now there is a great difference between these two, to worship on the top of his staff, and on the top of his bed. How therefore can they stand together? Answer: They may stand well together, and be both true; for when Jacob was about to give up the ghost, and was ready to die, he raised up himself upon the pillow towards the bed's head, and thereon rested his body. Now because his body was weak and feeble, he stayed himself also upon his staff; and thus comparing the places together, we see there is no repugnancy in them. Again, this we must know, that the same sentence of Scripture may be diversely read in divers places of Scripture, without any impeachment to the truth, certainty or perfection of Scripture; for when the Holy Ghost speaketh the same thing often, yet in different terms (as in this place), the diversity of words doth enlarge or open the sense and meaning, but no way corrupt or deprave the same. And thus much for the words.

Now to come to the fact itself; in Jacob's worship, three circumstances are to be considered:

1. The occasion.
2. The manner of it.
3. The time.

1. The occasion of Jacob's worship here spoken of (as we may read in Gen. 47), was this: When the time drew near that Jacob must die, he called for his son Joseph, and charged him deeply that he should not bury him in Egypt when he was dead, but that he should carry him thence, and bury him in the burial of his fathers. Joseph consents unto his father's request; and yet Jacob for certainty makes him to swear that he shall do so, and Joseph sware unto him. Now upon this issue that Jacob had with Joseph, the text saith that Israel worshipped towards the bed's head; that is, he praised God and gave thanks unto Him for this benefit that he should be buried with his fathers Abraham and Isaac. And yet this benefit did not so much concern himself as his children; for the carrying of his bones thither was to be a token and pledge, and a certain assurance unto them, that the land of Canaan should be theirs, and that God would bring them thither again.

In this circumstance, observe a notable duty belonging unto fathers and masters of families; they must in their lifetime have care of the posterity, and use all the means to help them and benefit them in their faith; not only while they are alive, but also after they are dead, after the example of this holy patriarch; and when they have obtained this benefit for them, they must be glad in their hearts and rejoice, and thereupon take occasion to praise the Lord, as Jacob did in this place.

2. Second circumstance. The manner how he worshipped; which is set down in these words, on the end of his staff. This circumstance is worth the marking; for good Jacob, by reason of the weakness of his body and old age, was not able to come forth of his bed and kneel down or prostrate himself; but raised himself upon his pillow towards his bed's head; and by reason of feebleness, being not yet able to sit upright, he doth lean and bear himself upon his staff.

Here we learn that we must not only worship God with our souls and hearts, but with our bodies also; for God hath created both, and therefore will be worshipped in both (1 Cor. 6:20). Old Jacob might have excused himself, that by reason of the weakness of his body he was not able to adore God with any bodily reverence; but yet we see he leans upon his staff; and so making supply to his bodily weakness, adoreth God with his body.

Question: In what kind of gesture must we worship God with our bodies? Answer: The Word of God doth not prescribe any, by way of limitation. For sometimes our Saviour Christ prayed kneeling (Luke 22:41), sometimes grovelling (Matt. 26:39), sometimes standing (John 11:41), as also did the apostles. And the Scripture approveth the publican, who stood afar off and prayed (Luke 18:13). Elias also (1 Kin. 18:42) is said to pray with his head between his legs; so that we have no certain form prescribed us; only this, we must use that gesture which may best set forth and declare our humble heart and holy affection unto God.

Here then is confuted an opinion of those which think that a man may worship God with his heart, and yet worship images with his body; that he may be present at idolatrous worship, yet keep his heart unto God. But Jacob's behaviour in this place doth both confute and condemn them; for he thought his body as due to God as his soul; and therefore worshipped God with both.

3. Third circumstance. The time when he worshipped God thus: namely, when he was dying, even then he worshipped God. In this circumstance we may note divers things:

(1) First, here behold the bad practice of the world; for many men when they are dying nowadays, are so far from following Jacob's example in worshipping and praising God; that they are fain to call

for men to teach them how they should worship God; having spent the former part of their life carelessly in regard of their souls; following worldly profits and pleasures, never thinking of their duty to God till they die. But what a fearful course is this, that men should thus brutishly go on from day to day, not knowing how to worship God. Well, all such as love their own souls, and would be like to godly Jacob; or (as our Saviour Christ said to Nathaniel) would be true Israelites (John 1:47), the natural sons of old Israel indeed; they must have care so to live in this world that they may worship God when they die; and therefore they must not defer, but learn betimes the knowledge and fear of God; that when death comes, they may be able to shew forth and practice the same. It is a lamentable thing to consider how the devil bewitcheth men's hearts, so as they live in the world as though they should never go out of it; never caring for religion till the day of death come upon them, and then it is too late to learn. But this is to follow Esau and not Jacob; who is therefore condemned by the Holy Ghost.

(2) Secondly, again, in this that Jacob worshipped God at his death, we learn this: that as men live, so they die, for the most part. Jacob was brought up in God's worship, and there lived all his life long; and look as he lived, so he died; for when he died, he worshipped God, resting his body on the end of his staff. This same truth is verified now, and shall be for ever; let a man worship God through the course of his life, and when he dieth he shall be able to worship and praise God. On the other side (take notice of it) he that lives in covetousness, in profaneness, in fornication and wantonness, for the most part so dies. Come to a covetous man at his death, and talk with him, and you shall find nothing in him ordinarily, but raving, and talking about his bargains, his bills, and indentures, and other worldly things. And so we may say of other lewd livers: look what mind they had while they were living, and that shall you find most in

their mouths while they are dying; which shews plainly that as men live, so they die.

But some will say that oftentimes the godly man raves and speaks lewdly, and (it may be) profanely before his death. Answer: It is true indeed; the best man is not freed from any kind of bodily sickness, but is subject to them, as well as the wicked; as to burning fevers and such like; by the violence and rage of which diseases they are often driven to rave, to speak fondly, and sometimes lewdly; yea (it may be) profanely. But what is that to the purpose? For though a godly man (for the time of his fit) cannot express the grace of his heart, but rather the corruption of his nature; yet when he hath recovered himself, he is sorry for the same, and is then ready and willing to praise God with all the heart. So that if we would die well, as Jacob did, praising God, then let us lead our lives as he did; namely by faith, and the direction of his Word and promises. Then come death when it will, and how it will; we may indeed be sore assaulted by sickness and temptation, but yet we shall never be overcome; for God is faithful that hath promised an issue to his children in temptation (1 Cor. 10:13).

(3) Lastly, whereas Jacob worshipped God at his death; here we learn that sound zeal will never decay. Many men have zeal indeed, but it comes only from the strength and soundness of their bodily constitution; and look, as strength decays, so doth that kind of zeal. But sound zeal will not decay and weaken with the body; but (as David saith of the righteous Psa. 92:12,14), they will flourish like a palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon, it shall still bring forth fruit in a man's age, and flourish. This we see was true in Jacob; for though he were old and feeble with sickness, yet he shewed forth sound zeal in his heart at the hour of his death. Even so will it be with us that profess religion; if zeal be sound in our hearts, it will shew

itself; and the older we are, the more fruits of grace we shall bring forth; and then shew forth more true zeal than in younger years. For though bodily strength decays, yet sound zeal will never decay, then will zeal flourish (if it be sound) like to the palm tree, which will bud and sprout, though the roots of it be cut off. Wherefore, if we would shew forth zeal in our old age, we must get soundness of it in our youth; for that will put forth itself in the time of death.

And thus much of Jacob's example.

“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.” Hebrews 11:22.

We have heard in the former verses the several examples of the faith of the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now in this verse the Holy Ghost setteth down the example of Joseph’s faith. The words in this verse are plain and easy, and need no exposition. They are a plain and brief sum of the end of the fiftieth chapter of Genesis. Let us therefore come to the points of doctrine and instructions which are learned and gathered forth of the words.

I. First, note in general the great resemblance of this example with the former; of Joseph a godly son, with Jacob a godly father; for both of them shew forth their faith when they die. For it is said of both, By faith when he died; so that in ground and circumstance of time, they both agree.

Herein we may observe:

1. First, that the good examples of superiors (whether they be civil or ecclesiastical) are of great force to bring other men on, and to make them forward in the duties of religion; their zeal (as Paul saith to the Corinthians in the case of alms) provoketh many. Jacob the father, a worthy prophet and patriarch, and giving an holy and blessed example unto Joseph and his children, doth shew forth at his death most notable behaviour; wherein he worthily expresseth the truth of his faith. Now his example works with Joseph, and he in his death behaves himself in the same manner that his godly father did before him; and therefore superiors must look to all their sayings and

doings carefully, that they may be worthy examples to their inferiors, to draw them on in religion, and in the fear of God.

2. Secondly, hence inferiors also must learn to follow the godly, holy and religious examples of their governors and superiors (whether they be civil or ecclesiastical), as we may see in this place, Joseph doth imitate the godly example of his father Jacob. Hereof St Paul giveth strait charge unto the Philippians, saying, Brethren, be followers of me, and look on them which walk so, as ye have us for an example (Phil. 3:17). And in the next chapter, exhorting them to honest conversation, he bids them do those things which they had heard, received and seen in him (Phil. 4:9). But are these duties practiced among us? Be the elder sort teachers of good things to the younger? And do the younger follow their elders in well-doing? Nay verily; but such are our times, too many among us, both those who give and those which follow good examples, are as sign and wonders, as the prophet speaketh; they are made a reproach, a by-word among men, and are foully disgraced by odious terms (Isa. 8:18). But this indeed is the practice of Ishmael, that mocked Isaac (Gen. 21:9). And we again must undoubtedly know that unless it be reformed, that hand of God which hath been stretched out against us in many fearful judgments, will not be pulled back, but stretched out still, till it bring us to destruction; for God will not suffer His ordinance to be condemned and His holy ones to be abused. He looketh for better fruits at our hands, and therefore we must learn of these godly patriarchs, both to give and to follow good examples.

In the example of Joseph, it is said that by faith Joseph when he died c. Joseph for ought we find in Scripture, had not such means to come by faith as his ancestors had before him. For the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had at other times the appearance of God unto them, at other times His holy angels brought them messages

from God, and sometimes they had His will revealed to them by dreams and visions; all which were notable helps and means both to begin and to increase faith in them; but Joseph wanted all these means, or at least many of them. For, read his whole history, and you shall not find that either an angel appeared to him, or else that God by dreams and visions spake unto him; and no marvel; for he lived out of the visible church where God's presence was, in superstitious and idolatrous Egypt; and yet for all this, he is here matched in the matter of faith with the three worthy patriarchs.

Is it then a good question to ask: How did Joseph come by this faith? Answer: We must know this; that though he had not the like extraordinary means with the patriarchs, yet he wanted not all means; for in his younger days he was trained up in his father Jacob's family, and by him was instructed in the ways of God, and in the practice of religion; and in his latter days also, he had the benefit of his father's company and instruction in Egypt. Now Jacob was not an ordinary father, but a notable patriarch and an holy prophet; in whose family God had placed his visible church in those days, wherein Jacob was the Lord's prophet and minister. Now Joseph, both in his young age, and also after his father came to Egypt, did hear and learn of him the ways of God; and by that means came to that excellent faith, for which he is so commended here and matched with his fathers the holy patriarchs.

1. Here we learn that the preaching of God's Word by his ministers (though extraordinary means, as revelations and visions, are now wanting) is sufficient to bring a man to faith; yea, to such a faith as the three patriarchs had. Indeed in the ministry of the Word, he which speaketh unto us is but a man as others are; but yet the Word which he delivereth is not his own, but the mighty Word of God; and look what is truly pronounced by him unto us out of God's Word, the

same is certainly sealed unto us by His Spirit, as if God Himself from heaven should extraordinarily reveal the same. And howsoever in former times men had visions and dreams, and angels from God Himself to reveal His will to them; yet this ministry of God's Word in the New Testament is as sufficient a means of the beginning and increasing of true faith, as that was then.

This plainly confuteth all those that neglect or condemn the ministry and preaching of the Word, and look for extraordinary revelations, and for visions and dreams, for the begetting and increase of faith and grace in their hearts. But our Saviour Christ doth notably check all such in the parable of the rich man; but the words of Abraham saying of the rich man's brethren, that they had Moses and the prophets; if they will not hear them, neither will they believe though one should come from the dead again (Luke 16:31), insinuating that if a man will not believe by the preaching of the Word, there is nothing in the world will make him to believe; neither revelations, nor visions, no not the words of them that rise again from the dead.

2. Secondly, the consideration of the sufficiency of God's ordinance in the holy ministry to beget and to increase our faith, must stir us up to all care and diligence, not only to hear the Word of God preached to us, but to profit by it both in knowledge and obedience.

And thus much for the first point.

II. The second point to be handled is the commendation of Joseph's faith by two actions thereof; to wit:

1. His mention of the departure of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and,

2. His commandment concerning his bones. Of both which we will speak briefly, because the special points herein were handled in the former verse.

1. For the first,

Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, that is, out of Egypt into Canaan.

(1) Here we may observe a most notable work of faith: it makes a man to keep in memory the merciful promises which God hath made unto him. This is it which commends Joseph's faith for a lively faith; that being about to die, he remembereth this merciful promise of God made to his forefathers touching their posterity; to wit, that after they had continued as servants in a strange land four hundred years, they should then have a good issue and a happy deliverance, and be brought into the land of Canaan (Gen. 15:13,14). This is a notable work of faith, as may appear by two notable effects hereof in the life of a Christian. For first, by this remembrance of God's merciful promises, the servant of God in all times, and in all distresses and extremities, doth find comfort unto his soul. This brings to his memory the wonderful goodness and mercy of God by which he is comforted. When David was in a most desperate case, so as he cried out by reason of affliction and temptation, Will the Lord absent Himself for ever, and will He shew no more favour? Is His mercy clean gone? Doth His mercy fail for evermore? (Psa. 77), with such like most fearful speeches; how then did he comfort himself in this distress? Answer: Surely, by remembering the works of the Lord, and His wonders of old, and by meditating on all His works and gracious acts which He had done for him. So likewise in another place, in great anguish of spirit he saith to his soul, Why art thou cast down my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? (Psa. 43:5).

Yet in the next words he thus stays himself: Wait on God, for I will yet give thanks unto Him; He is my present help and my God. How came David to say so in this distress? Answer: By means of faith, which doth revive and refresh the death of man by bringing to his remembrance the merciful promises of God.

St Paul pressed with corruption, cried out: O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:24). Yet in the next words he saith, I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord; then I myself in my mind serve the law of God c. How come the latter words follow on the former? Answer: In the first words indeed, he is cast down with the view and sight of his natural corruption, which drew him headlong into sin; but yet the latter words are a remembrance of the merciful deliverance from sin which God had wrought in him by Christ; and therefore he breaketh out to this saying: I thank my God through Jesus Christ c.

(2) Secondly, the remembrance of God's promises serveth to be a means to keep a man from sin; for man's nature is as ready and prone to sin, as fire is to burn when fuel is put on it. But when by faith he calls to mind God's merciful promises, especially those which are made unto him in Christ; then he reasoneth and striveth against temptation, and lays the Word as a shield unto his soul, to keep out the fiery darts of Satan; yea, he applies the same Word to his own soul as a corrosive unto corruption; whereupon it is said that faith purifies the heart (Acts 15:9). How? Namely, beside the applying of Christ's blood, it brings to memory God's merciful promises in Christ; which stays a man from committing such things as would pollute and defile the heart. And therefore is faith said to be our victory over the world (1 John 5:4), because by applying to our souls God's promises in Christ, we do not only condemn the world in

regard of Christ; but also stand against the assaults thereof; so that it is a most notable and excellent work of faith.

(3) Lastly, observe the circumstance of time, when Joseph made remembrance of their departing. The text saith, When he was dying. Hereof we have spoken in the former verse; yet this one thing may here again be well remembered: Joseph calls to mind the promises of God at his death, which concern the temporal deliverance of His people; and we by his example, when we are dying, must learn to call to remembrance the gracious promises which God hath made unto us in Christ, touching our eternal deliverance from the spiritual bondage of the devil. Oh! Great will be the fruit hereof, not only for inward comfort to our own souls, and joy to such as love us; but also we shall hereby give a worthy evidence to the world, that we have been sound in the faith; wherein we shall leave a good precedent to those that follow us.

2. The second fact of Joseph's faith is this: He gave commandment concerning his bones.

The meaning thereof is this: that Joseph, lying on his death bed, gave a solemn charge to his brethren, to have a special care how and where they buried him; that his bones might not be lost, but so preserved while they stayed in Egypt, that at their departure they might be carried into the land of Canaan, and there buried in the sepulchre of his fathers. The causes why Joseph gave this commandment were these:

(1) Hereby to testify unto his brethren and posterity that howsoever he lived a long time in the pomp and glory of Egypt, yet his heart was never set thereon; but he had greater delight, and more esteemed to be counted a true member of the church of God, than to be a noble prince in the land of Egypt. For if he had loved and liked the pomp of

Egypt, he would have had his sepulchre among them; but giving commandment to the contrary, it sheweth plainly that his heart was never set on that glory and pomp in which he lived.

By whose example we are taught that in using the world and the things thereof, we must not set our hearts on them; but as the apostle saith (1 Cor. 7:31), use them as though we used them not. Still have our affections in heaven, which is our spiritual Canaan.

(2) Hereby Joseph would testify unto his brethren what he esteemed his chief happiness; namely, that in faith and hope he was joined unto his fathers and ancestors that believed in God; and that he was of their religion, and looked for a resurrection and another life, as they did. And this he would have known, not only to his brethren and posterity, but to the Egyptians also, among whom he lived.

(3) Joseph hereby intended principally to confirm the faith of his brethren and posterity in God's promise, for enjoying and possessing the land of Canaan after his death; and this was a notable way to strengthen their faith. For when they should see or remember his corpse, it was unto them a lively sermon, to shew them plainly that howsoever they lived for a while in bondage in Egypt; yet the day should surely come wherein they should be set at liberty, and brought (as free men) into the land of Canaan. And undoubtedly, Joseph would have his bones kept among them, that they might be a pledge unto them of their deliverance.

Yea, note further the story saith (Gen. 50:25), that Joseph did not only charge his brethren generally; but binds them by an oath to carry his bones; hereby shewing that it was a matter of great weight which he did enjoin them; even a sign and pledge of the truth of God's promise in their deliverance. Whence we learn that it is a matter of great moment for every Christian, both carefully and

reverently to use the sacraments, which God hath given as pledges of His covenant of grace made with us in Christ. For shall Joseph cause his brethren and posterity to swear concerning his bones, that so they might more reverently regard that pledge and sign of their outward deliverance? And shall not we with reverence and good conscience, both esteem and use these holy pledges of our eternal deliverance by Christ Jesus?

The papists from this place would justify their practice in reserving and honouring the relics of saints. Now by relics, they mean the parts of the bodies of saints departed; as the head of John Baptist, the arms or bones of this or that saint, the milk of the virgin Mary, and also the parts of the cross whereon Christ suffered, with such like. Answer: First, let us know that their relics are nothing else but forged devices of their own, and no true relics of saints; as by one instance may appear. For the parts and parcels of wood kept in Europe, which they say are parts of the cross whereon Christ died, are so many that if they were all gathered together, they would load a ship; which shews plainly that herein they use notorious forgery, for it was no greater than a man may bear. And the like is their behaviour in the rest. Secondly, the keeping of Joseph's bones was for a good end and purpose, namely, to testify his own faith, and to confirm them in believing God's promise for the duration of their bondage in Egypt; but their relics serve rather to extinguish faith in Christ than to confirm it; for they nourish men in fond devices and foul superstitions, and not in the truth of God's promises. Thirdly, we do not read in all the Bible that Joseph's bones were ever worshipped; and therefore from this place they have no ground whereon to build their superstitious worshipping of relics.

And thus much for the example of Joseph's faith.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.” Hebrews 11:23.

In this verse the Holy Ghost proceedeth further, and setteth down unto us a notable and worthy example of the faith of Moses’ parents. If we would see the history at large, we must read the second chapter of Exodus; of which these words are an abridgement, or brief epitome. Now, here the faith of Moses’ parents is commended unto us by two notable actions:

I. The hiding of Moses their child when he was born.

II. Their courage and boldness in that action, in not fearing the king’s commandment.

I. Of their hiding of him, we will first entreat generally, and then come to the circumstance thereof.

1. In general, their hiding of the child was this: They kept him close, and unknown to the Egyptians for three month’s space; because the king had given commandment and charge to all his people that they should drown every man child born among the Hebrews (Exod. 1:22). In this action of their faith, we may observe some special points:

(1) First, Moses was to be a worthy prophet and captain or guide unto the people of Israel; and therefore howsoever other men-children were drowned upon the cruel command of Pharaoh, yet the Lord provides for him so soon as he is born, that he shall be hid, and so preserved from the tyranny and rage of Pharaoh. Wherein we

learn that God in the midst of all persecution, doth evermore preserve the seed of His church. There be two estates of God's church in the world; the first is quiet and peaceable, when the gospel is publicly, likely professed, taught and received without hostile opposition, as by God's great mercy it is in our church at this day. The second is an hidden estate, when as it cannot shew itself visible, but the open profession of the gospel is suppressed by the rage of the enemy the devil, and by wicked and cruel men that be his instruments. Thus God suffered His church sometimes to be shadowed, and in these times, many of His dear children to be slain and put to death for the sins of His church, yet so, as that always He preserves the seed of His church. When Isaiah had shewed the Jews the fearful desolation of their land; that the cities should be wasted without inhabitant, and their houses without man; yet then he saith, There shall be a tenth in it, and the holy seed shall be the substance or underprop thereof (Isa. 6:13). God doth not deal with His church as He doth with the enemy thereof; He but lops off the branches of His church, whenas He stocks up the root of His enemies (Isa. 27:7,8). When he visiteth Sodom and Gomorrah, He destroyed them utterly out of the earth; but the Lord doth ever keep fast the seed of the church, that when the storm of persecution is blown over, his church may spring and flourish afterward.

(2) Here some may say, Seeing God purposed to make Moses such a worthy man over His people, why did He not by some wonderful, powerful and mighty manner preserve him against the rage of Pharoah? Answer: God indeed was able to have sent a legion of angels for his preservation, or to have done it after some strange visible manner; but yet He would not; for we must know and remember that it is God's pleasure to shew His power in weak means. He can preserve every servant of His from all kinds of injury; but He will not always do so. When Christ Himself our Saviour was

in His infancy persecuted by Herod, God His Father was then able to have preserved Him in Judea, and to have overthrown His persecutor by many legions of angels; yet He would not, but only useth the poor help of Joseph and Mary, with the ordinary weak means of flight; and all this He did that He might be glorified in the weakness of His servants; for when all means fail, then doth He magnify His power and providence in preserving those that trust in Him. And thus much of this action in general.

2. The circumstances to be considered in the hiding of Moses are four:

(1) The time when he was hid, the text saith, When he was born. Moses (as we said) must be afterward a notable servant, and a worthy instrument of God, whereby He would work the deliverance of His people, out of the bondage of Egypt; and yet we see he is fain to be hid so soon as he is born.

Hence we learn that those that be servants of God, and are in special favour with Him, must look for trouble and affliction in this life, from the cradle to the grave; from the day of their birth to the hour of their death; Moses is in danger of his life by Pharoah so soon as he is born. And so was our Saviour Christ by Herod, when He was but a babe; whereupon His parents fled with Him into Egypt for His safety. And answerable to their infancy was the rest of their life; full of danger, full of trouble. And as it was with them, so it is with others (2 Tim. 3:12), he that will live godly must suffer persecution; and He that will be Christ's disciple must take up his cross every day, and follow Him (Luke 9:23).

This is a point which all of us must mark; we must not look to have ease and joy on earth. It is enough for us to enjoy that after this life.

If Christ Himself carried His cross out of the gate, we then with His disciples must take up our cross and follow Him every day.

(2) The second circumstance to be considered is this: How long was Moses hid? Namely, three months. Question: Why was he hid no longer? Answer: Because they could not; for it is likely that there was a search for him, and therefore they made a basket of reed, and daubed it with slime and pitch, and laid the child therein, and put it among the bulrushes by the river's brink (Exod. 2:3).

Thus did the parents adventure the child's life, for the saving of their own; wherein we may see a great want and weakness in their faith; for they kept their child a while by faith, but afterward committed him to the dangers of the waters, of wild beasts, and fowls of the air. So that it is plain their faith was weak and mingled with fear, and with some doubting. For in keeping the child three months, they shewed forth lively faith; but whenas they expose him to danger for their own safety, herein they bewray some want of love and weakness of faith; and yet we see they are here commended for their faith. Which sheweth plainly that if a man have true and sound faith, though it be but weak, yet God in mercy will take knowledge of it and commend it, passing by the weakness of it; yea, and unto that faith will give the promises of life everlasting made in Christ.

(3) The third circumstance to be considered is this: Who it was that kept Moses three months. In Exodus it is said that his mother kept him; but here it is said that his parents kept him; where the Holy Ghost includes his father also. How can both things be true? Answer: We must know that the mother was the chief doer in this work; and the father, though he was not a doer, yet he gave his consent. Now we must remember that consent is a kind of doing, whether it be in good things or in evil; for when Saul did but keep the persecutors clothes

that stoned Stephen (Acts 7:58), whereby he signified his consent; thereupon he confesseth himself to be guilty of his death (Acts 22:20).

(4) Lastly, observe the cause, or rather the occasion that moved the parents to save their child. It was a notable comeliness or beauty which did appear in the body of the child when he was born. This moved then to reason thus with themselves: Surely God hath given such beauty and comeliness unto this child, that it is very likely He will use him hereafter, to be some notable instrument of some great work; we therefore will keep him alive. This point must be marked for us; for beside their natural affection, this also was motive to make the parents save the child.

Hence we may learn that those whom God will employ above others in some special service for His own glory, are usually endowed with some special gift above all others; yea, many times with outward grace and comeliness in the body. For this beauty in Moses' body moved his parents to seek to save his life; they persuaded themselves that God had not imprinted that in him for nought. Saul (we know) was made king over Israel; and it is noted that the Lord had given him a goodly stature; for he was higher than any of the people from the shoulders upward (1 Sam. 9:2). And so David had a good countenance, and a comely visage (1 Sam. 17:42); for the Lord purposed to make him king over Israel. Now as he did excel his brethren in beauty and comeliness, so he was to be far above them in this special service of God, in governing His people.

Hence we learn first that comeliness and beauty is a gift of God. Secondly, that those which excel others in these gifts of nature must look also that answerably they excel them in holiness and zeal in the service of God, and doing good unto men, as Moses and David did.

But alas, wretched is the practice of these times; for commonly those which have comeliness and beauty above others, do use it as a bait and occasion unto all sin and naughtiness; as to whoredom and lasciviousness, that thereby they may more fully satisfy their own wretched and satanical lusts; but this must carefully be looked unto, of all such as have the gifts of nature in most excellent manner than others. For if they use them, or rather abuse them to be means of sin, and to set forth the pride and vanity of their hearts, they have much to answer for unto God at the dreadful day of judgment. Hath God given thee beauty and comeliness; and doest thou use it as a bait to ensnare others for the satisfying of thy lust? Then look unto it thou evil servant, for thou doest not hide but consume thy master's talent, employing it to His dishonour; therefore it shall be taken from thee; and instead thereof, thou shalt have ugliness and deformity, and so in soul and body be tumbled to hell with unclean spirits. And thus much of the first action of their faith, with the circumstances thereof.

II. The second action, whereby the faith of Moses' parents is commended unto us is this: They did not fear the king's commandment.

These words must not be understood absolutely and simply, but with limitation. For many places of Scripture are spoken simply, which must be understood with respect; as when it is said (Matt. 11:18), John came neither eating nor drinking, that is not, eating nothing at all, but eating little; and Christ saith (Matt. 10:34), He came not to bring peace, but a sword; that is (as Luke expounds it, Luke 12:51), rather debate than peace. And so in this place, Moses' parents feared not the king's commandment; that is, they did not fear it overmuch, or wholly, or only, or so much as others did in this like case.

1. Here then first we may learn, how far forth we must obey superiors and magistrates: we must obey them not simply, but in the Lord (Eph. 6:1), that is, in all their lawful commands; but when they command things evil and unlawful, then we must stay ourselves, lest obeying them we rebel against God. For this we have sufficient warrant in this place, as also in the apostles; who being commanded (Acts 4:18,19) that in no wise they should speak or teach in the name of Jesus; answered, Whether it be right in the sight of God, to obey you rather than God, judge ye. And the midwives of Egypt are commended by the Holy Ghost (Exod. 1:17) for saving the young children alive against the king's commandment. And the three men of the Jews, Shadrach. Meshach and Abednego, are renowned with all posterity for disobeying the commandment of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 3:16,17) of worshipping the golden image. By which examples we may see plainly that our obedience to men must be in the Lord only. Neither is our refusing to do their unlawful commands any disobedience indeed; because the fifth commandment in this case ceaseth to bind, and gives place to the commandments of the first table, which are greater, as we shewed before (v.17).

2. Secondly, see here this godly boldness, in not overmuch fearing the king's commandment, is made a work of faith; whence we learn that true faith in the promises of God, doth serve to moderate a man's affections. There is no man, but if he be left to himself, he will go too far in the sway of his affections; experience sheweth that many through anger and joy, have lost their lives; some for fear have forsaken religion, and sorrow hath cost many a man his life; yea, any affection, if it be not moderated and stayed, will bereave a man of his senses, and make him a beast and no man.

But behold the use and power of true faith. It serveth to mitigate a man's affections; so as if a man be angry, it shall be with moderation;

and so we may say of fear, joy, hatred, or any other affection; faith will assuage and stay the rage thereof. For undoubtedly, Moses' parents might have been overwhelmed with fear of Pharoah's tyranny and cruelty, but that God gave them faith, which did moderate this fear. There is none of us, but if we look well into ourselves, we shall see that we are excessive in many affections, sometimes in fear, sometimes in anger, sometimes in sorrow, and such like. Now would we know how to bridle these strong passions? Then get true faith; it is the means whereby a man may moderate and stay the rage of his affection, so as they shall not break out in extremity. Is a man angry? Why, if he have faith, he will bridle his anger. Is he sorrowful? Yet it is in measure; and so for the rest, faith will rule them all, and yet extinguish none. Which should greatly provoke us to labour for true faith, seeing it is of such use and power in the stay of our affections.

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” Hebrews 11:24-26.

Here the Holy Ghost comes to the commendation of Moses’ faith, and in these three verses propounds a most notable example hereof.

By Moses’ faith in this place we must understand saving faith; which is nothing else but a gift of God, whereby Moses received the promise of God touching salvation by the Messiah, and of the promised land, made to Abraham and to his seed after him, and applied the same unto himself particularly.

Now in the first entrance of this example, the Holy Ghost setteth down a wonderful thing of Moses; namely, that Moses had faith; and by it did this great work. This (I say) is strange, because he was brought up by Pharaoh’s daughter in the court of Pharaoh, where was no knowledge of the true God, and indeed nothing but idolatry, wantonness and profaneness. And yet here it is testified of him, by the spirit of God which cannot lie, that he had faith; which is a wonderful thing. And the like is recorded of others in the Word of God; as in Ahab’s court (who was a king that had sold himself to work wickedness), yet the Spirit of God testifieth that even there was good Obadiah, a man that feared God greatly. And Herod was a most deadly enemy to Christ, and yet Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s friend, ministered of her goods unto Christ. And Paul saith, The saints which are of Caesar’s household salute you (Phil. 4:22); where,

by Caesar's house is meant the court of Nero, who was a most bloody man, and a wicked persecutor; and yet in his house were the professors of Christ's gospel. By these examples we learn that Christ hath his children and servants in the midst of his enemies; for these three courts: of Pharaoh, Herod and Nero, may be called a kind of hell; and yet there were some of God's servants in them all. Which sheweth us clearly the truth of God's Word, which saith of Christ, that He reigneth in the middle amongst His enemies (Psa. 110:2). Howsoever they rage and seek to blot out His name and root out His kingdom, yet in spite of their throats, He will rule in the middle of their kingdoms, and have those which truly serve Him and fear His name (Rev. 2:13). God had His church in Pergamos, where Satan's throne was.

Again, this fact of Moses serves to check many a man in this age, that is brought up in the church of God and under godly parents and governors, and yet is a hater and mocker of the religion of Christ. Surely Moses in the day of judgment shall stand up against all such, and condemn them. For he had faith, though he were brought up in a most profane place; and they are void of faith, nay, enemies unto it, though they live in the bosom of the church.

But let us come to the strange act which Moses did, for which his faith is commended. The text saith of him first of all, When he was come to age, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. How Moses became her son, we may read at large in Exodus 2, where it is said that having found Moses in the basket, she preserved him alive, and brought him up as her own child, purposing to make him her own son and heir. But this honour of hers he would not accept; this he refused by faith, and this is that notable and famous act for which his faith is here commended unto us.

But some will say: This fact of Moses may seem rather worthy of blame than praise, as being a practice of great rudeness and ingratitude; for she preserved his life from death, and brought him up as her own child, and vouchsafed him this special favour, to make him her heir; and therefore Moses should not thus have condemned her favour. Answer: Indeed it had been Moses' part to have shewed himself thankful in accepting this favour at her hands, and also enjoying the same, if he might have done it with the fear of God, and keeping a good conscience. But that he could not do; for if he had dwelt still with her, and been her son and heir, he should have been undutiful unto God. Now this is a rule to be remembered and practiced always; that in duties of like nature, the commandments of the second table do bind us no further than out obedience thereto may stand with obedience unto the commandments of the first table; and when these two cannot stand together, then we are freed from obedience unto the second table; as for performing honour and thankfulness unto men, when we cannot therewithal perform obedience and service unto God. And this was Moses' case; because he could not both serve God and continue his thankfulness to Pharaoh's daughter (for in staying with her, he should have made shipwreck of true religion), therefore he forsaketh her favour and honour; and for this cause is here commended unto us. The like did our Saviour Christ; for when the people would have made Him king, he refused it, and fled from among them (John 6:15), because it would not stand with that calling for which he was sanctified and sent into the world. Therefore Moses' act was commendable, and doth greatly set forth unto us his holy faith.

I. In this act of Moses thus generally considered, observe a notable fruit of true faith: It maketh a man esteem more of the state of adoption to be the child of God, than to be the child or heir of an earthly prince. This is plain in Moses in this place. And the like we

may see in David; for though he were king, yet he set all his royalty and majesty at naught, in regard of God's blessing of adoption; and therefore he saith, The Lord (not the kingdom of Israel) is my portion (Psa. 73:26). And again, when he was kept from the Lord's tabernacle and the company of God's saints through persecution, he saith that the sparrows and the swallows were more happy than he (Psa. 84:3), because they had nests where they might keep their young, and sit and sing; but he could not come near the Lord's altar. And yet more fully to express the earnestness of his affection this way, he saith that he had rather be a man of base office, even a doorkeeper in the house of God, than a man of renown in the tents of wickedness (v.10). But howsoever, these men were of one mind herein, yet come to our age, and seek in town, country and people, and we shall see this fruit of faith is rare to be found; for generally (though I will not say all) the most of those that are born of good parentage, as the sons of knights or squires, and especially of nobles, are so bewitched with the pride of their earthly parentage, that they have scarce a thought after adoption in Christ. God's heavenly graces will take no place in their hearts, but they utterly condemn all other estates of life in regard of their own. And this is the common sin of the whole world; for at earthly preferments, men will stand amazed; but seldom shall you find a man that is ravished with joy in this: that he is a child of God, as Moses was. But this practice must be a precedent for us to follow. We must learn to have more joy in being the sons of God than to be heirs of any worldly kingdoms; and to take more delight in the grace of adoption through Jesus Christ, than in the sonship of any earthly prince.

It is a great prerogative to be heir to a king or emperor, but yet to be the child of God goes far beyond it, even above comparison. For the son of the greatest potentate may be the child of wrath; but the child of God by grace, hath Christ Jesus to be his eldest brother, with

whom he is fellow heir in heaven; he hath the Holy Ghost also for his Comforter, and the kingdom of heaven for his everlasting inheritance. And therefore we must learn of Moses, from the bottom of our hearts, to prefer this one thing: to be the child of God, before all earthly things, either pleasures, riches, or any other prerogatives whatsoever.

Now more particularly in this act of Moses, note two circumstances: 1. The manner how; and 2. The time when he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

1. For the first, his refusal was not in word, but in deed; for if we read the whole history of Moses, we shall not find that either he spake to Pharaoh or to his daughter, or to any other to this effect, that he would not be her heir, nor be called her son; but we find that he did it indeed; for when he came to age, he left the court oftentimes, and went to visit his brethren, to comfort them, to defend them, and to take part with them. And hence we must learn, not so much to give ourselves to know and to talk of matters of religion, as to do and practice the same both before God and men. This did Moses. It is the common fault of our age that we can be content to hear the doctrine of religion taught unto us; yea, many will learn it, and often speak thereof; but few there be that make conscience to do the things they hear and speak of. But let us learn of Moses to put those things into practice which we learn and profess, and in silence do them; for the fewer words the better, unless our deeds be answerable. If any of us were to walk upon the top of some high mountain, we would leave off talking and look unto our steps for fear of falling. Behold, when we enter the profession of Christianity, we are set upon an high mountain; for the way of life is on high; and Christianity is the high calling of God. We therefore must be wise, as Solomon saith (Prov. 15:24), and look well to our conversation, having a strait watch over

all our ways through the whole course of our lives, even to the end of our days, and not stand so much on speaking and talking as on doing, for the doer of his work shall be blessed in his deed (Jam. 1:25). This is the thing we must look unto, as the only ornament of our profession, declaring that we have the power of godliness; but if deeds be wanting, our religion is vain, we are like the fig tree which Christ cursed, having leaves and no fruit (Matt. 21:19).

2. The second circumstance to be considered is the time when he refused this honour, namely, when he came to be a man of years and discretion. A man in common reason would judge thus of Moses' act: Moses hath rare fortune offered him, he might have been son and heir to a princess. Surely this is a rash act of his, and void of consideration, to refuse it; undoubtedly, he far overshot himself herein, either through rashness or ignorance. But to prevent such carnal surmises, the Spirit of God sets down this circumstance of time; saying that he did not refuse it in his youth, but when he was come to age, that is, to perfect years of discretion; and by reason thereof, must needs have consideration and judgment to know what he did; then did he refuse this honour, to be Pharaoh's daughter's son and heir. In Acts 7, we shall see that he was forty years old when he did this. And therefore this is true which is here said that when he was come to age and staidness, then he refused this honour; for forty years is a time, not only of ripeness for strength, but of staidness in judgment and discretion.

Out of this circumstance we learn two points:

(1) That it is a common fault of young years, to be subject to inconsideration and rashness; for Moses did not refuse the honour of Pharaoh's daughter when he was young, lest it should seem to be a point of rashness; but when he was come to age (as the text saith);

insinuating that if he had done it when he was young, it might have been esteemed to have been a rash part, and done in some hasty passion of youth. Every age of man hath his faults; and this is the fault of youth, to be heady and rash in their affairs, for want of consideration and experience. And therefore all young persons must have care of the sins of youth, and watch the more against them, because they are so incident to their years. Now the way to avoid them is to follow Christ's example (Luke 2:52), to labour to grow as in years, so in wisdom and grace; and to obey the counsel of Paul to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:22), to flee the lusts of youth, following after justice, faith, charity and peace, with all that call upon the name of the Lord with a pure heart.

(2) Secondly, this circumstance of time, noting Moses' deliberate staidness in the act, doth plainly advertise to us what is or should be the virtue of old age, and the ornament of years; namely, staidness and discretion; whereby I mean, not only that natural temper of affection which old age bringeth with it; but such religious discretion whereby men of years do all things in faith, so as their works may be pleasing and acceptable unto God. For when a man is grown in years, and hath had experience and observation in the church of God, he must not only have a general knowledge and wisdom, but a particular wisdom; whereby he may do in faith whatsoever he takes in hand, and therein please God. But alas, this may be spoken of old men in these days, that in regards of this wisdom they are very babes; a thing greatly disgraceful to their condition; for Paul bids the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14:20), that they should not be children in understanding, but of ripe age; yea, and he forbids the Ephesians (Eph. 4:14) to be children still, wavering and carried about with every wind of doctrine. Whereby we may see that aged persons do quite degenerate from what they ought to be when they are babes in knowledge, void of spiritual wisdom. Indeed we must grant that our

aged persons are worldly wise; and he must have a cunning head, and (as we say) rise early, that herein goes beyond them; but bring them to the books of God, and to give a reason for their actions, that they are done in faith; herein they are mere babes, and ignorant; neither can they tell what it is to do a thing in faith, so as it may be acceptable to God. Herein, many that are young in years do quite outstrip them. What would we think or say of a child that, being set to a good school, should still be in the lowest form, though he had long continued at it? Surely we should judge him either exceeding negligent, or destitute of ordinary capacity.

Behold the church of God is the school of Christ; and if a man have lived long therein (as twenty, or forty years), and yet be no wiser in religion than a young child, is it not a shame unto him? And shall we not condemn him of great negligence? Wherefore let all aged persons here learn their duty; which is, to grow to ripeness in spiritual wisdom, that so their age may be to them a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness (Prov. 16:31).

“choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” Hebrews 11:25.

The meaning of these words is this: Moses cast with himself that if he should yield to become heir to Pharaoh's daughter, he must live with her, and please her in all things, and so altogether leave God's church and people, and God's holy religion, which thing to do he abhorred in his heart; and with all, he must leave and lose the eternal blessedness of God's children, for the honours and sinful pleasures of the court, which were but momentary. These things considered, he chooseth rather to be in affliction and misery with the people of God, than upon these conditions to live in Pharaoh's court, and to become his daughter's son and heir.

And because this may seem a strange choice, the Holy Ghost doth afterward render a reason hereof, which is this; because Moses liked rather to enjoy the prerogatives of God's church (though it were in misery) than to enjoy any honour in a wicked court, such as indeed Pharaoh's was.

II. In this verse therefore, we are to note a second fruit of Moses' faith, to wit, that he preferred the fellowship and communion of God's saints, before all other societies in the world.

This fruit of Moses' faith doth discover unto us a grievous fault which reigneth in this age; to wit, the neglect and contempt of the communion and society of saints. There is a society and fellowship that is loved and magnified among us; but what manner of society is that? Surely of such as give themselves to drinking, jesting, scoffing, riot mirth and gaming. This is the common and general good fellowship; through which God is greatly dishonoured. For most men set their delight therein, and are never merry but in such company, wherein indeed they delight themselves in their sensuality. True it is, men plead that this good fellowship is a virtue. But then was Moses far overseen; for in Pharaoh's court he might have had all kinds of such good fellowship and company; yet he likes it not, but rather chooseth affliction and misery with the people of God than to enjoy such fellowship in Pharaoh's court. And as for the goodness of it, it is neither so esteemed, nor called by any, but by them that call good evil, and evil good. We see Moses a man of wisdom and learning (Acts 7:22), no child, but a man of forty years old, hates and abhors this good fellowship, as the worst estate in the world; rather choosing the society of a miserable and persecuted church, than the best of that fellowship which a king's court could yield. Let us therefore learn more wisdom out of his practice. Some say this good fellowship is harmless; and such men who thus merrily pass their times, do no

such harm as many others do. But I answer, men are born to do good. Again, to misspend time, wealth and wit; are not these evil and harmful, both in themselves and in their example? And which is worst of all, it is no fellowship with God, nor any part of the communion of saints, but rather a fellowship with Satan; therefore let all that will, like true Christians, have true comfort in that article of their creed, the communion of saints, esteem the fellowship of good and holy men above all other. For by this communion with God's saints, a man reaps great profit, whenas the other brings to a man the ruin both of his body and soul. By the society of the godly, we are first made partaker of their gifts and holy graces; and secondly, of their prayers, and the blessings of God upon them; which things, if there were no other, might move us to embrace this blessed society before all other. And yet further, by being of this society, a man avoids many of God's judgments; if there had been ten righteous men in Sodom, they had all been spared from destruction. Wherein we may see that they that cleave to such as fear the Lord indeed, never receive harm, but rather much good; for, for the elects sake it is, that the world yet standeth; and if they were gathered, heaven and earth would go together; but for the calling of the elect, the hand of God is yet stayed. Why then should not Moses' example be our rule, above all worldly pleasure to rejoice in the society of God's saints.

Thus much in general. Now in the particular words are many notable points of doctrine, which we will touch in their order.

And chose rather c.

Mark here a rare and strange choice as ever we shall read of. There are two things propounded to Moses: The first is honour and preferment in Pharaoh's court; to be son and heir to Pharaoh's

daughter; wherewith he might have enjoyed all earthly pleasures and delights. The second is the miserable afflicted condition of God's church and people.

And of these two, Moses must needs choose the one. Well, what chooseth he? Surely he refuseth the prerogatives and dignity that he might have had in Pharaoh's court, and makes choice of the misery and affliction of God's people in adversity; that so he may enjoy the privileges of God's church. A wonderful choice, for which his faith is here commended and he renowned to all posterity. The same choice hath God set before all men in all ages. In former times, God set before Esau two things: a mess of red broth and his birthright; but profane Esau chose the worse; he forgoes his birthright, so he may have the broth. But far worse did the Gadarenes; there was set before them Christ Jesus the Lord of life, and their hogs and cattle. Now they preferred their hogs before Christ; a most miserable and senseless choice. And is it not as ill with us? There is set before us on the one side heaven, and on the other side hell; but men for the most part choose hell and forsake heaven. Civil, worldly men, whose delight is in all riches, they prefer earth before heaven; the service of sin, which is the greatest slavery, before the service of God, which is perfect freedom and glorious liberty of the saints in light; and thus do all men without God's special grace. Whereupon Paul prays in his epistles for the churches, that God would give unto them the spirit of wisdom, that they may be able to judge between things that differ. And this wisdom we must labour for, that when these different things are set before us, we may make a wise choice; otherwise we shew ourselves to be like brute beasts without understanding, and do quite overturn our own salvation. In the ministry of the Word we have life and death, good and evil set before us, as Moses said to the people (Deut. 30:15,19). Let us therefore endeavour ourselves to

choose life, by embracing and obeying the Word of God; and so shall we follow both his precept and practice.

To suffer adversity with the people of God.

Here we may observe what is the ordinary state and condition of God's church and people in this world, namely, to be in affliction and under the cross. Hence Paul saith, that we must come to heaven through manifold afflictions (Acts 14:22). The Lord knoweth what is best for His servants and children; and therefore He hath set down this for a ground, that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

Thus the Lord dealeth with His children for special causes, for:

(1) First, all crosses, as loss of goods, friends, liberty or good name, they are means to stir up and awake God's people out of the slumbering fit of sin; for the godly are many times overtaken this way. The wise virgins sleep, as well as the foolish; now, afflictions rouse them out of the sleep of security. See this in Joseph's brethren; who went on a long time without any remorse for selling their brother; but when they were stayed in Egypt, then they are roused up, and can say (Gen. 42:21), This trouble is come upon us for selling our brother.

(2) Secondly, afflictions serve to humble God's children (Lev. 26:41). So the church of God speaketh, I will bear the wrath of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him (Mic. 7:9).

(3) Thirdly, they serve to wean the people of God, and to drive them from the love of this world; for if men might always live in ease, they would make their heaven upon earth; which may not be. And herein God dealeth with His children like a nurse; when she will wean her

child, she lays some bitter thing upon the paps head, to make the child to loathe the pap; so the Lord, to draw our hearts from the world, and to cause us to love and seek after heaven and heavenly things, He makes us to taste of the bitterness of affliction in this world.

(4) Fourthly, affliction serves to make God's children to go out of themselves to seek sincerely unto God, and to rely only upon Him, which in prosperity they will not do. This Paul confesseth of himself and others: We (saith he) received the sentence of death in ourselves, because we should not trust in ourselves, but in God (2 Cor. 1:9). So good king Jehosaphat, when he was compassed of his enemies, he cried to the Lord, and said: Lord we know not what to do; but our eyes are towards thee (2 Chr. 20:12). Yea, the rebellious Jews are hereby driven to seek the Lord, whom in prosperity they forsook; as we may see at large Psa. 107:6,12,13,19.

(5) Lastly, afflictions serve to make manifest the graces of God in His children. The Lord (saith Job) knoweth my way and trieth me (Job 23:10). Remember all the way (saith Moses to the Israelites (Deut. 8:2)) which the Lord thy God led thee this forty years, for to prove thee and to know what was in thine heart. Hence James calleth temptations, the trial of faith (Jam. 1:2,3). And Paul makes patience the fruit of tribulation (Rom. 5:3). For look as the showers in the springtime cause the buds to appear, so do afflictions make manifest God's graces in His children. Patience, hope and other virtues lie close in the heart in the day of peace; but when tribulation comes, then they break forth and shew themselves.

Hence we learn that it is not always a token of God's wrath to suffer affliction. If any man or people be laden with crosses, it is no argument that therefore they are not children of God; for as Peter

saith (1 Pet. 4:17), Judgments begin at God's house, and any cross upon a people, family or particular persons, if it bring forth the fruit of grace in them, is a true sign that they belong to God. Yea, when men wander from God by an evil way, these afflictions are means to call them home to God (Psa. 119:67), Before I was afflicted, I went astray. And they that forsake their sin, and return to God in time of affliction, are certainly God's people; for the wicked man fretteth and murmureth against God when a cross cometh, and he cannot abide it. But the godly man is humbled thereby, and it makes him more obedient in all duties unto God.

This we should consider; for by an outward profession, we bear the world in hand that we are God's children, and therefore we come to hear God's Word, and to learn how to behave ourselves as beseemeth His children. But if we would be known to be God's children indeed, then when any of God's judgments do befall us, we must make this use of them; namely, labour thereby to be humbled for our sins, and to forsake our sins, and to make conscience of all bad ways for ever afterward; and then we shew ourselves to be God's children indeed. But if under the cross, or after the cross, we be as dissolute as ever we were, and still follow our old sins, then we cannot be judged to be God's people and children, but rather a wicked and stubborn generation, which the more they are corrected, the worse they are; like a forge, the more it is beaten, the harder it is. Let us therefore by the use of God's judgments, shew ourselves to be God's children; so shall we say with David, with much joy and comfort, It is good for us that we have been in trouble (Psa. 119:71).

Thus we see Moses' choice; now come we to the things he refused:

To enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

By pleasures of sin, we must understand the riches and dignity that Moses might have had in Pharaoh's court and kingdom. Which are called the pleasures of sin, not because they were so in themselves, for so they were the good gifts of God; but because Moses could not enjoy them in Pharaoh's court without living in sin; for he must have refused the society of God's church and people, and so have been a stranger from the covenant which God made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and with their seed after them, if he would have been son to Pharaoh's daughter.

Here then the Holy Ghost setteth down two notable reasons which induced Moses to refuse these honours and dignities: first, because they were the pleasures of sin; and secondly, because he should enjoy them but for a season.

1. The first reason affordeth us many notable points worthy of our consideration:

(1) Here we learn that riches, honour and dignity severed from true religion, are nothing but the pleasures and profits of sin. This was Moses' judgment, as the Holy Ghost here testifieth; and it is the plain truth of God, as Solomon after lamentable experience disputeth and proveth at large; concluding of riches, honour and pleasures, and all earthly things separated from the fear of God, they are nothing else but mere vanity and vexation of spirit (Eccl. 1:14). And Paul saith, to the impure, all things are impure (Tit. 1:15); his meat, drink and apparel, which in themselves are otherwise the good gifts of God.

The consideration hereof is of great use, for:

(i) First, it lets us see what is the state of these men which lay aside religion and good conscience, and betake themselves wholly to the world, to get riches and preferment. Most men are of this

disposition, and such indeed are only counted wise. For let there be speech tending to a man's commendation, usually this is the first matter of his praise, that he is a substantial wealthy man and one that looks well to himself; as though riches or honour were a man's chief happiness. But howsoever the world judgeth of these men, yet hereby we may see and know that their case is miserable. For without religion and the fear of God, their riches and honours are but the pleasures and profits of sin; and therefore the more they heap up riches after this sort, not regarding Christ, nor His gospel; the more they heap up to themselves the treasures of sin, and consequently the greater condemnation; for worldly treasures severed from religion are but the mammon of iniquity, which causeth damnation. Hence Christ said unto His disciples (upon occasion of the rich young man) that it was as easy for a great camel to get through the eye of a needle, as for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:24); that is, such a rich man as sets his heart to get riches and honour, not regarding the religion of Christ. Whence also in another place He pronounceth this fearful sentence against them: Woe be to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation (Luke 6:24). They therefore that lay aside religion and give themselves wholly to seek gain and honour, are before God most wretched and miserable; and the longer they continue in this course, the more miserable they are; for the more sin they heap up, and so the deeper shall be their condemnation. Wherefore if any of us have been thus minded heretofore, let us now leave this course as most dangerous to our souls; for what will it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his soul? (Mark 8:36).

(ii) Hence we must all learn, especially they that have any measure of wealth more or less, to join with the use of our riches the fear of God, and the practice of true religion; for sever these asunder, and riches are nothing else but sinful pleasures. It is a good conscience which

rectifieth the owner in the right use of his honour and treasures; but without that, he pollutes the blessings of God which he enjoys, and they being polluted shall turn to his greater woe. A man would have thought that king Belshazzar had been an happy man, when he kept his royal feast and drank wine in golden bowls before a thousand princes that were under him, and before his concubines; but the end of all that his jollity may shew us the nature of such prosperity. For as soon as he saw the fingers of a man's hand, writing upon the wall, he became quite confounded in himself; his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him; so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other (Dan. 5:6). What comfort had he now from all his riches and pleasures? So Dives, while he lived, might seem for his wealth and riches to be happy; yet all this did him little good; for he had but his pleasure for his lifetime (Luke 16:25), and after this life, his soul went down to hell. A worldly man would judge the rich man in the gospel, a most happy man, that said to his soul by reason of his great abundance of outward wealth (Luke 12:19), Soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, live at ease, eat, drink, and take thy fill; yet because herewith he wanted religion, a good conscience, and the fear of God, this sentence was denounced against him: Oh fool, this night will they fetch away thy soul; then whose shall these things be? Wherefore unless we will wilfully cast away our own souls, let us sanctify our interest in all earthly blessings by a sincere endeavour in all things, to shew forth the fear of God, with the keeping of faith and a good conscience; and let us begin with this, as Christ saith, First seek God's kingdom, and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Let us thereby seek to have our hearts acceptable unto God; and then all things shall be clean unto us.

(iii) Thirdly, are riches and honour, being severed from true religion, but the pleasures of sin? Then undoubtedly, all recreations, all sports

and pastimes, severed from religion and a good conscience, are much more the pleasures of sin. This Solomon knew well; for speaking of such mirth, he calls laughter, madness; and to joy (he saith), what is that thou doest? (Eccl. 2:2). Oh, then, how manifold be the sins of all sorts of men? For who almost doth not neglect religious duties for matters of sport and pleasure? Wherefore if we desire joy indeed in any worldly things, let us first lay the foundation in our own hearts, by getting and keeping true faith and a good conscience.

Secondly, whereas Moses refuseth dignity and honour only for this: because they would be unto him the pleasures of sin; here we are taught in what manner and order we ought to enjoy worldly riches and honour. Moses' practice here must be our direction; we must enjoy them and use them with thankfulness to God, so far forth as they will further us in the course of religion and true godliness. But if the case stand thus, that we cannot enjoy them both together, then we must follow Moses' example; choose religion and a good conscience, and let honour and preferment go. This is Moses' practice; and we may resolve ourselves that if he might have enjoyed them together, he would have refused neither; but because he could not have them both, therefore he preferreth the religion of Christ with a good conscience before the honour and wealth of Egypt.

Thirdly, note this: Moses doth not only refuse the riches and pleasures of Egypt, when they would become unto him the pleasures of sin; but rather than he will enjoy them, he is content to suffer great misery and adversity with God's people. Where, behold a singular virtue in Moses: He judgeth it to be the greater misery to live in sin; and therefore he chooseth rather to suffer any adversity and reproach in this world, than to live and lie in sin; because thereby he should displease God, his most loving Father in Christ. A most notable virtue in this servant of God; and the like mind bear all

those that have the same graces of saving faith and true repentance that Moses had. St Paul esteemed the temptations unto sin, which Satan suggested to his mind, to be as beatings and buffetings, and as pricks and thorns in his flesh (2 Cor. 12:7). And David saith (Psa. 119:136), His eyes gush out rivers of waters, because men break God's commandments. Was David thus grieved for other mens' sins? Oh! Then what a grief did he suffer, when he himself brake God's commandments, and thereby displeased God.

Now look how these servants of God were affected, so must every one of us that profess the faith and religion of Christ, labour to be affected towards sin. We must judge it the greatest misery and torment in the world to do anything that shall displease God. But alas, come to our days, and the case is far otherwise; for to most men, it is meat and drink unto them to commit sin; so far are they from counting it a misery. Yea, if a man be ordinarily addicted to some special sin, you then may as soon take away his life, as bereave him of his sin; he will adventure the loss of heaven for ever, for the pleasure of sin for a time. But all such, are far unlike these holy servants of God; for they counted it the greatest cross and misery that could be, to do anything that displeased God, and did check and break the peace of good conscience. And if we look to enjoy the like peace and comfort with them, we must strive against our own corrupt disposition, and labour to find sin our greatest sorrow. Worldly miseries may affect us; but in respect of sorrow for sin, all worldly grief should be light unto us. Indeed, we are otherwise minded naturally, but herein we must shew the power and truth of grace, that to displease God by any sin is our greatest grief.

2. The second reason that moved Moses to refuse the honours and pleasures of Pharaoh's court, was because he should have enjoyed them but for a time; for the time of his natural life was the longest

that possibly he could have enjoyed them. And the same reason must move every one of us to use this world, and all things herein (even all temporal benefits), as though we used them not; being always willing and ready to leave them whensoever God shall call. This same reason doth Paul render when he persuades the Corinthians to the same duty (1 Cor. 7:31), Use this world (he saith) as though you used it not; for the fashion of this world goeth away. As if he should say: All things in the world last but for a time, and if a man would never so fain, he could but enjoy them to the end of his life; and therefore use them as though you used them not. But pity it is to see how far men are from the practice of this duty; for they set their whole heart upon the world; and to get riches is their delight, and their god. This ought not so to be. God hath not laid down these precepts and examples in vain. Undoubtedly, if they draw us not to the like practice, they shall rise up in judgment against us at the last day. And thus much of Moses' choice, and refusal.

“esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”
Hebrews 11:26.

Moses (as we have heard) refused the honour and wealth of Egypt, and chose to live in affliction with God's people. Now, because this might seem to be a strange choice, and a natural man would soon condemn him of folly for his labour; therefore here the Holy Ghost lays down a reason that moved Moses thus to do; to wit, Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with God's people than to enjoy the pleasures and honour of Egypt, because he was persuaded that reproach for Christ's sake was greater riches than all the wealth in Egypt. So that he refused not absolutely riches, honour and other comforts; but chose the best riches and honour, and left the worse upon a sound judgment between things that differ.

Hereby we may observe in general, how needful a thing it is for every Christian to have sound knowledge and understanding in the Word of God. For he that would walk uprightly, and approved of God, must be able to judge between things that differ; not only between good and evil, but between good and good, which is the better; and so of evils, which is the worse. Which no man can do, but he that hath a sound and right judgment in the Word of God; for therein is attained the spirit of discerning. Many there be that by the course of their lives choose hell, and refuse heaven; which undoubtedly comes from their ignorance of the Word. But ignorance will excuse none. He that will come to heaven must be able to discern good from evil; and accordingly to choose the good, and to refuse that which is evil, which, without divine and supernatural knowledge, no man can do. And therefore all ignorant persons, and all such as are blinded through the deceitfulness of sin, must shake off their security, and get sound knowledge in Scripture, with a good conscience; that when things which do differ are set before them, they may, with Moses, choose the better.

But let us come to Moses' judgment more particularly.

He esteemed the rebuke of Christ c.

That is, he was firmly resolved that reproach and contempt for Christ's sake, was greater riches unto him than the treasures of a whole kingdom. But some will say, This is a very strange judgment; can it possibly be true and good? Answer: Yes, undoubtedly, it is most sound judgment, and worthy of eternal remembrance in every one of us; that to suffer reproach for Christ's sake, is greater riches than all worldly wealth. The truth hereof is proved by many reasons out of God's Word:

1. God hath made a promise of blessedness to those which suffer for Christ's sake. Blessed are you (saith Christ) when men revile you, and speak all manner of evil sayings against you for my name's sake (Matt. 5:11). And St Peter saith, If ye be railed upon for my name's sake, blessed are ye (1 Pet. 4:14). And lest any should doubt how this can be, Christ shews wherein this blessedness consists, saying; He that forsaketh house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake; shall receive an hundredfold more, and shall inherit eternal life (Matt. 19:29). A most worthy promise, assuring us that no man loseth by suffering for Christ's sake; for he shall be rewarded an hundredfold over. Instead of earthly friends and worldly comforts, he shall have the love and favour of God shed abroad in his heart, which will be an overflowing fountain of comfort for soul and body for ever, far more worth than the wealth and treasures of all the kingdoms in the world. A small springing fountain (we know) is better to an house than an hundred cisterns full; because of continual supply from the springing fountain, when the cisterns will be spent. Behold the love of God in Christ, with other spiritual graces, shall be in all that suffer for the name of Christ, as living streams flowing unto life eternal; whenas the cisterns of all worldly pleasures and treasures shall be spent and dried up.

2. By suffering affliction for Christ's sake, we are made conformable unto Him in His humility; that so we may be made like unto Him after this life in glory. So Paul saith, our light affliction worketh in us an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17). And again, it is a true saying, If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall all reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:11,12). This assurance can no worldly riches give; and therefore we may boldly say that the suffering or reproach for Christ's sake is greater riches than the treasures of a whole kingdom.

3. To suffer for Christ's sake is a token of God's special love; and therefore St Paul bids the Phillippians not to fear their adversaries, which is a token of salvation unto them, and that of God; because it is given to you (saith he) for Christ, that you should not only believe, but suffer for His sake (Phil. 1:29). Wherefore if suffering for Christ has a promise of blessedness; if it makes us conformable to Christ, and be a sign of God's special love; then it is to be esteemed above the riches and honours of the whole world.

Are afflictions of Christ to be esteemed above the treasures of a kingdom? Then we must all learn to rejoice in the troubles and wrongs we suffer for Christ's sake. So did the apostles (Acts 5:41), They departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer affliction for His name. And St Paul brags thereof greatly, saying, I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 6:17). And look, as these servants of God rejoiced in their sufferings for Christ; so likewise must we labour for the same heart and affections in the like case; for who would not rejoice to be made partaker and possessor of the treasures of a kingdom? Well, the rebuke of Christ is greater riches than the treasures of a kingdom.

This lesson is of great use, for:

1. Howsoever many among us come to hear God's Word, yet there be many also that scoff and mock at religion, and at the gospel of Christ, and the professor thereof; whereby the most are hindered in profession and many daunted, and quite driven back. But we must here learn not to be discouraged by these mocks. Indeed we must take heed that we give them no just occasion to mock us; and then if we be scoffed at, we shall never be hurt by it; nay (though that be far from their intent) yet in mocking us, they do us great honour. For the Word of God that cannot lie, is this, that to suffer affliction for

Christ's sake is greater honour and riches than the treasures of a kingdom. And if Moses' judgment be good, which God Himself doth here commend; then we are happy and blessed in enduring these mocks and scoffs for Christ.

2. Secondly, we must here learn instruction for the time to come. We have for a long time, through the great goodness of God, enjoyed peace and wealth with the gospel of Christ; but undoubtedly, these days of peace will have an end, they cannot last always; God's people must pass through the fiery furnace of affliction. Well, when this is come upon us, how shall we be able to bear it? Surely, we must now learn to be of this opinion that Moses was of; we must judge it to be the greatest honour and riches that can be, to suffer affliction for Christ's sake; and this will be the ground of all constancy, courage and Christian boldness in the day of trial. For he that is of this mind will never fear affliction, nor reproach for Christ's sake; nay, he will be so far from fearing it, that he will rejoice and triumph therein.

3. Further, where it is said, Esteeming the rebuke of Christ; here mark that the rebuke of God's church and people is called the rebuke of Christ. The people of God in Egypt were laden with reproaches and rebukes; and behold, Christ accounts it His rebuke, and the Holy Ghost so calls it. Whereby learn this, that Christ esteemeth the reproach and affliction of His church, as His own affliction. When Saul went to persecute the brethren at Damascus (Acts 9:2-4), Christ Jesus calls to him from heaven, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Saul went to persecute the Christians, and yet our Saviour Christ taketh it unto Himself. And after his conversion he saith (2 Cor. 4:10), Every way we bear about in our bodies, the dying of the Lord Jesus. And again, Let no man put me to business, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus (Gal. 6:17). This is a point of special use.

(1) First, hence we learn, that Christ hath a special care of His church and children, in that He judgeth their afflictions to be His own afflictions; and therefore He can no more forget, or leave off to help them in distress, than deny Himself.

(2) Secondly, here is a special comfort for God's children that be in affliction: their afflictions are not their own alone, but Christ's also; He is their partner and fellow sufferer. This may seem strange, but is most true; Christ puts (as it were) His shoulders under our afflictions, and takes them to Himself, as though they were His own; than which what can be more comfortable? For though thou thyself cannot bear it, yet trust undoubtedly that Christ who bears it with thee, will give thee strength to undergo it unto victory.

(3) Thirdly, if the affliction of a Christian be the afflictions of Christ; then it is a fearful sin for any man to mock or reproach his brother, in regard of his profession and religion, for mocking is persecution (Gal. 4:29 with Gen. 21:9). And that reproach which is cast upon a Christian, is cast upon Christ; and Christ takes it as done to Himself; the persecutor wounds Christ Jesus through the sides of a poor Christian; which is a fearful thing. For in so doing, he sets himself against the Lord Jesus, he kicks against the pricks; and if he so continue, he must needs look for some fearful end; for who hath ever been fierce against the Lord, and hath prospered? (Job 9:4). Wherefore if any of us be guilty of any sin in this kind, let us repent; for unless we turn, our condemnation will be remediless.

(4) Again, the afflictions of the Israelites are here said to be their sufferings for Christ; where note, that though Christ's coming was then afar off, yet the Israelites then knew of Christ; for else they could not suffer for Him.

This confuteth those which hold that every man may be saved by his own religion, whatever it be, if he live civilly and uprightly therein. Their reason is taken from the Jews, who (they say) had only the knowledge of outward ceremonies, and so were saved. But that opinion is here disproved; for the Jews knew Christ, and professed Him, or else they would never suffer for Him; and therefore they were saved by Him, and not by their obedience to outward ceremonies. And thus much of the reason which moved Moses to make such a choice as he did.

Now in the end of this verse is added a reason why Moses was of this strange judgment, to think the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; namely,

Because he had respect to the recompense of reward.

That is, he often set his eyes to behold, and his heart to consider, how God had made a promise of life everlasting after this life, unto all those that obeyed Him and trusted in Him after this life; for the enjoying whereof, he preferred that estate wherein he might live in the fear of God, though it were a state of reproach, before all other whatsoever. Where we see what it is that will bring a man to esteem affliction, with the fear of God, better than the treasures and pleasures of an earthly kingdom; namely, as we see the bodily eye to behold the salvation; so we must lift up the eye of the mind by faith, to behold the recompense of reward; that is, the state of glory in heaven prepared for God's children. This did the Christian Hebrews in the primitive church (Heb. 10:34), they suffered with joy the spoiling of their goods; a very hard things, but yet most true, for it is the Word of God. And the reason is rendered: They knew in themselves how that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance. And our Saviour Christ endured the cross, despising the

shame, for the joy that was set before him (Heb. 12:2), that is, in consideration of that joy in glory whereto He should be advanced Himself, and bring all His members. This we must make use of; for if we will live godly in Christ Jesus, we must suffer affliction. This, flesh and blood will not yield unto; and therefore, to persuade us to suffer with joy, we must with Moses have respect to the recompense of reward. We must say thus to our souls: The day will come wherein we shall have life everlasting in the kingdom of heaven, if we now serve and fear Him. Shall not we then for His sake be content to suffer a short affliction, seeing the greatest of them are not worthy of the glory that shall be revealed? (Rom. 8:18).

Question. But why doth the Holy Ghost call everlasting life a reward?
Answer: It is not so called because Moses did procure it, and deserve it at God's hand by the dignity of his works in suffering; for sure, no man can merit anything at God's hands. The case is plain; for Christ as He is man (consider His manhood apart from His Godhead) could not merit anything at God's hands; for He that would merit of God by any work must do three things: 1. He must do the work of himself, and by himself; or if he do it by another, the other meriteth, and must have the reward and praise of the work. 2. Secondly, he must do it of mere good will, and not of duty; for that which is of duty cannot merit, because a man is bound to do it. 3. The work done to merit must be of that price and dignity that it may be proportionable to life everlasting, which is the reward. Now, though Christ, as He is man, be above all men and all angels in grace and dignity; yet consider His manhood apart from His Godhead, and He could not do a work with these three properties, for: first, the works done of the manhood were not done of itself, but from that fulness of the Spirit wherewith He was endued. Secondly, Christ as man is a creature; and so considered, His works are of duty to the Creator, and so

cannot merit. Thirdly, Christ's works, as a man simply considered, are finite, and so could not merit infinite glory.

Question: How then did Christ merit at God's hands? Answer: Partly by means of God's promise made in the Law, which was this: Do this and thou shalt live; but properly and chiefly, because he was not a mere man only, but (withal) true and very God; for because His obedience both in His life and death (though performed in His manhood) was the obedience of Him that was God and man, even from the infinite excellency of the person whose it is, it becomes meritorious. In His manhood He observed the Law, and suffered for our sins; but the dignity thereof came from the Godhead; for He that did those works for us, was both God and man.

Now, if Christ considered as man only cannot merit; then much less can any other man merit at God's hands. And therefore Moses though he were a worthy man, yet because he was but a man, and a sinful man also, he could not by any work deserve life everlasting at God's hands.

But life everlasting is called a reward in the Scripture, because it is the free gift of God, promised by God to His children in Christ; for this end, to assure and draw them on in obedience. And it must not seem strange that we say a reward is a free gift; for so it may be, as we shall see by comparing two places of Scripture together; to wit Matt. 5:44 with Luke 6:32. For whereas Matthew saith, if you love them that love you, what reward have you; St Luke, repeating the same thing, saith, What thanks have you, or (as the word signifies) what favour or free gift have you? Secondly, there may be another cause rendered why everlasting life is called a reward, to wit, not in regard of the work done, but in regard of the worker considered in Christ; for Christ's merit makes life everlasting to be a reward. Now,

every true believer that endeavours to do the will of God, is in Christ; and so Christ's righteousness with the merit thereof, is his, so far forth as serves to make his person acceptable to God. Whereupon he hath a promise of reward made unto him upon his obedience, yet not for his work, but for the work of Christ's obedience in whom he is; and so must these words here be understood:

1. The consideration of this reward of life eternal through Christ, to those that suffer for His sake, may make us joyful and patient in our afflictions for righteousness sake. A natural man will endure much for a good recompense in the end. Now Christ saith, Great is your reward. And let us rejoice in suffering for Christ; holding fast our confidence which hath so great recompense of reward.

2. Secondly, is life everlasting a recompense, that is, a giving of a reward? Then here is condemned the desperate practice of many a one, who spend their whole life in a greedy pursuit after the profits and pleasures of the world; as it were running themselves out of breath in the way to hell, without all regard of their souls till death come; thinking, that if at the last gasp they can cry God's mercy, and commend their souls to God, all is well. But all such persons for the most part deceive their own souls, not considering that life everlasting is given as a reward. Now we know that no reward is given to any man till the work be done which he is set about; he must come work in the vineyard some part of the day, that would have his penny at night; as for those that neither stir hand nor foot to do the work, what reward can they look for? And yet this is the state of carnal livers, they addict themselves wholly to earthly things. But if we look for any reward at the day of death, we must labour in the works of godliness all the days of our life; for therefore we were redeemed (Luke 1:74,75).

In the whole book of God, we find but one man that lived wickedly, and repented at his end; that is, the thief upon the cross. Which shews that it is a most rare thing for a man to have the reward of life everlasting after this life, that labours not in the works of godliness in this life.

3. Thirdly, the consideration of this reward, must stir up all God's children unto all diligence in the duties of godliness, and that with cheerfulness, through the whole course of their lives. When we shall die, we will look earnestly for this reward; and therefore while we live, we must diligently do the works that God commandeth; and then when death comes, we may assure ourselves that God will give us this reward; not because we did deserve it by our works, but because He hath promised it in Christ, upon our endeavour and obedience and true repentance. And thus much for the reason of Moses' choice.

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” Hebrews 11:27.

In this verse the Spirit of God proceedeth to another example of Moses' faith; and hereto also in the verse following he addeth a third. Now, He is thus large in the commendation of his faith for this end: to persuade the Hebrews, to whom this epistle is sent, that they were not to look for any justification by the works of the law. And His reason is, because if any man could be justified by the works of the law, it must be Moses, who gave the law to the people from the Lord, and did excel in obedience to both tables, and therefore is a renowned prophet unto all posterity in special favour with God (Num. 12:7,8). But Moses could not be justified by the works of the law; for here the Holy Ghost proveth that Moses was justified and saved by faith. The thing that commends Moses, and makes him stand before God, is not his works, but his faith; and therefore the conclusion is, that as Moses was not justified by his works, but by faith; no more must they stand upon their works to be justified thereby, but labour for such faith as Moses had. Now, this faith of Moses is a true saving faith, founded on these two promises of God: 1. On this great and main promise made to Abraham, I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed; and, 2. On another particular promise rising from the general, made unto him when he was called to fetch the Israelites out of bondage, which was this: I will be with thee, and guide thee (Exod. 3:12). And in this place, Moses is said to have faith, not only because he believed that God would be his God, as He was the God of all Abraham's seed; but because he believed particularly that God would be his God, and defend and be with him in the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt.

To come particularly to this fact:

By faith, Moses forsook Egypt.

Moses departed from Egypt twice: First, when he had slain the Egyptian, and fled from Pharaoh unto Midian, and there kept Jethro's sheep. Secondly, forty years after, when he led the people of Israel out of Egypt into the land of Canaan; and here some make it a question, whether of these departures is meant in this place? Answer: It is most likely that this place is to be understood of his second departure, rather than of the first; and the reason is taken out of Exod. 2:14, where we find that the first time, he fled for fear; for as soon as he heard that his slaughter of the Egyptian was known to Pharaoh, he fled in such fear as that he durst not return again for forty years. Now these words are not to be understood of such a flight; for here it is said, He departed, not fearing the king's wrath, or fierceness.

Here, some will say, this is no commendation; for malefactors and rebels do flee their country. Answer: They flee indeed, yet not in faith, but in fear. Moses fled in faith; and hereby his faith is commended, that he fled not fearing the king; but malefactors flee for fear of punishment. Moses departed with courage and boldness, and therefore fled not as a malefactor; for he feared not the king, as appeareth plainly in the history; for though Pharaoh had said unto him (Exod. 10:28), Get thee gone, see thou see my face no more; for when thou comest in my sight, thou shalt die; yet Moses went once more, namely, the tenth time, and told him of the tenth plague, and said the Pharaoh's servants should come down unto him, and fall down and pray him to get out, with the people and their cattle (Exod. 11:8). And when the Israelites murmured against him at the Red Sea, when Pharaoh was at their heels, and they had no way to flee, Moses

encouraged the people, saying, Fear not, stand still, and behold the salvation of the Lord which He will shew you this day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen this day, shall ye never see again (Exod 14:13). Whereby it notably appears that Moses departed in faith without fear of Pharaoh.

But some will say: For a man to come into another man's kingdom, and to carry away his subjects without the king's consent, is an act of rebellion and sedition; and therefore worthy of no commendation, but rather shame and punishment. And this did Moses; he comes from Midian, and carries away the Jews which had been a long time Pharaoh's subjects; and for whose service he might plead possession, and a long prescription; therefore it seems to be no act of faith. Answer: Indeed if Moses had done this on his own head, he might worthily have been thus censured. But when he came to Egypt, he had a calling immediately from God to do as he did; and for the confirmation hereof, he had God's promise of assistance, in working strange miracles; and when he carried the people out of Egypt, he did it by commandment of a King higher than Pharaoh. Neither yet did Moses carry them away as a private man, for he was a public person, an high magistrate, and no stranger, but one of themselves; yea, he was a king, as may appear in God's Word (Deut. 33:5), where he is plainly called a king; and (Gen. 36:31), it is said, there were so many kings in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel. Now the last of those kings reigned at the time when Moses went with the Israelites out of Egypt; so that Moses was their king, and had the authority and government of a king over them from the Lord; and therefore it was no act of rebellion in him, but a work that did greatly commend his faith, being grounded upon God's commandment and promise.

Thus we see how we must conceive of Moses' act. Now we come to some particular points to be considered therein:

1. How came it to pass that Moses now had this courage to depart from Pharaoh, not fearing his commandment; whereas forty years before, being called to shew himself unto the brethren, as one whom they were to respect as their deliverer (Acts 7:23,25), he fled immediately out of Egypt upon the notice of one act of defence on behalf of the Israelites? Answer: The cause of his courage at this latter time was this: God now renewed His commission, and confirmed His former calling. For when he was first called, he did his duty, and revenged their wrongs; but yet being in danger, and his calling being as yet but a secret instinct, he was fearful and fled. But now when God called him the second time and confirmed the same calling, both by promise and commandment, and power to work miracles, then fearful Moses becomes courageous and bold.

Here, then, observe that there is a difference in God's graces: there is a first grace, and a second grace. The first is that which God gives to any man for any calling; the second is that which God adds to the first for the confirming thereof. And the first is not effectual without the second; as here we see Moses' first calling was not effectual with him, till the second came. And so God's first grace is not effectual till the second come; by which the former is confirmed, strengthened and increased. And the second is confirmed by the third; and so we must go on from grace to grace, if we will be bold and courageous in any duty, either of our general or particular calling. This must be well considered; for that any man stands in grace, or increaseth therein, either respecting his particular calling, or his Christian conversation, it comes from this: that God adds a second grace unto the first. And therefore whosoever is enabled for any duty, hath great cause to praise God; for whether we continue in grace, or increase therein, it

cometh from the goodness of God, who addeth grace to grace; which if He should not do, we should fall away, and not be able to go forward in the fear of God and the duties of our calling; for the first grace would not suffice to strengthen us against temptation. And therefore howsoever God hath strengthened us for the time past, yet still we must pray to God to deliver us from evil; which plainly imports that our standing is from His daily supply of new grace.

2. When went Moses out of Egypt? The time is directly set down (Exod. 12:41), Even the self same day when the promise of God was expired; for when the 430 years were expired, they went all the host of the Lord out of Egypt; neither before nor after, but the very same day. Indeed Moses was chosen to be their captain forty years before, and sent unto them by God; and St Stephen saith, He thought they would have understood so much (Acts 7:25). But then they would not take him for their guide. Yet now, forty years after, when God's determinate time of 430 years was expired, he comes again unto them, to carry them out of Egypt; and then they acknowledge him and follow him out, according to God's commission.

Hence we learn, first, that no creature can alter the rule of God's providence. Forty years before, Moses would have delivered the people, but he must stay until the time of the Lord's promise was accomplished; and then he carries them away. Secondly, this must teach us not only to believe that God both can and will keep His promises; but also by faith to wait for the time wherein He will accomplish the same unto us. Moses is fain to wait forty years for the fulfilling of God's promise. When Daniel understood how long the Israelites must be in captivity, he would not pray for the shortening of that time; but when he knew that the time of their return drew near, then he prayed unto the Lord most earnestly, waiting for the accomplishment of God's promise in their deliverance. And David

thus waited on God for deliverance in all his troubles. And their examples must we follow, for the fruition of all God's blessings.

3. In what manner doth Moses part? The text saith, he went out, not fearing the king's commandment; so that his departure was with courage. Whence we learn sundry instructions:

(1) First, here is a notable precedent for the framing of our lives, which must be a rule unto us. We must walk diligently in our callings, as Moses did; and though crosses do meet us, so that Pharaoh fall out with us; if kings become our enemies, yet we must not lay aside the duties of our callings; but after Moses' example, go on therein with courage. Moses without fearing the king's wrath, went and led the people away. And so must every one of us do; although dangers come, we must not fear, but stand fast in our profession, and go on in the duties of our callings (Eccl. 10:4), If the spirit of him that ruleth riseth up against thee, leave not thy place.

(2) Secondly, hence we learn that magistrates which are to govern the people, ought to be men of courage in performing the duties of their calling. When too heavy a burden lay on Moses in judging all the congregation himself; Jethro, his father in law bids him provide among the people men of courage, fearing God, to be rulers (Exod. 18:13-21). Now their courage must not be a proud haughtiness, or an indiscreet cruelty, but a godly boldness, which may enable them to the duties of their calling, without fear of man. To this end, the Lord put of His Spirit upon the seventy which were to rule with Moses (Num. 11:17). Now the Spirit of God is not the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7). Which shews that in a magistrate must be courage to call and (if need be) to compel others to the duties of their callings, how great soever they be. And it is a matter of great weight and moment in God's church;

for the minister may teach and speak as much as he will, or can; yet unless with the sword of the Spirit, there be joined the temporal sword of the magistrate to reform men's lives, and to keep them from open sin against the law of God, and to urge them to the duties which the minister teacheth; surely, their teaching and preaching will be to small effect.

(3) Lastly, Moses went with courage out of Egypt. This departure of his was a sign of our spiritual departing out of the kingdom of darkness; for so Paul applieth it, (1 Cor. 10). And therefore after Moses' example, we must with courage come every day more and more out of the kingdom of darkness, marching forward with courageous faith and heavenly boldness towards our blessed Canaan, the glory of heaven; we must not leave this to the last breath, and then think to have heaven's gates ready open for us; but we must enter into God's kingdom in this life. Look as Moses by his faith did depart boldly out of Egypt, so must we in heart, by faith depart out of the kingdom of sin. This we shall do, when we use means to establish the kingdom of Christ Jesus in our hearts, and do forsake the works of sin and darkness. For look where there is no departing from sin, there is no faith; and therefore let us shew ourselves to have true faith, by departing more and more boldly and joyfully out of the kingdom of sin and Satan; that so it may appear we love the light and hate darkness. And in this journey, let us not fear any contrary commandment, nor the furious wrath of spiritual Pharaoh the devil, nor all the gates of hell; for Christ Jesus is our guide.

Because a man might think at the first that it was a rash and desperate part in Moses thus boldly to take away the Israelites, not regarding Pharaoh's commandment; therefore in the latter part of the verse, the Holy Ghost setteth down a reason that moved Moses to do, in these words: For he endured, or was courageous, that is, he

took heart to himself. Why so? Because he saw God that is invisible. That is, he cast the eye of faith upon God, who had promised the evidence of His power and presence in their deliverance. So that it was the work of Moses' faith, laying hold on the promise of God's presence and protection from the rage of Pharaoh, that made him thus confident and bold.

Hence we learn that the true valour and manhood that was in Moses, and is in all God's children, like unto him, is a gift of grace. Among many gifts of the Spirit, poured upon our Saviour Christ, the spirit of strength or courage is one (Isa. 11:2). And Jethro's counsel to Moses is notable this way; he bide him provide for governors, men of courage, fearing God (Exod. 18:21), insinuating that true courage is always joined with the fear of God, and is a fruit of grace. But some will say that many heathen men, who never knew the true God, nor what the gifts of the Spirit meant, had that courage. Answer: True it is that they had courage indeed; but it was nothing but a carnal boldness (not worthy of the name courage; being only a shadow of true fortitude) arising from ambition, pride, and other fleshly honours; whereas Moses' courage sprang from the grace of faith, in the merciful promises of God made unto him concerning his deliverance and safety. And indeed, howsoever wicked men have a noticeable shew of divers virtues, yet in the trial they prove but shadows; for true valour and other virtues do always accompany regeneration.

As he that saw Him that is invisible.

Here is the cause that made Moses thus courageous; and this will make any man bold: if he can be persuaded in his conscience of God's special presence with him, and providence and protection over him.

Here then observe a singular fruit of faith: it makes God, who is indeed invisible, to be after a sort visible unto us. Moses by faith saw Him that was invisible; for by faith he was persuaded of God's providence, and special protection in the delivery of His people, though Pharaoh should rage never so much. So Enoch is said to have walked with God, because he saw Him by the eye of faith in all his affairs. And when Joseph was allured to sin with his mistress, what stayed him? Surely the fear of God, whom he saw by faith: How can I do this great wickedness (saith Joseph) and so sin against God? (Gen. 39:9). As if he should say, I am always where God is present; how then shall I do so wickedly, and God see it? And the same is the state of all true believers; their faith makes the invisible God to be after a sort visible unto them; so as a faithful man may say, God is present with me, and protecteth me. Whereby we may see what little faith is in the world; for few can truly say that they see God; which faith enableth a man to do. Yea. Most men care so little to see God, that He is far from their very thoughts. Many have made means to see the devil; but where is he that labours for such a measure of faith, that he may see the invisible God? If wicked men run to conjurers to see the devil, whom they shall once see to their sorrow, let us labour for faith in the Word and sacraments, and this faith will make us so to endure in all tribulation, as though we saw God.

Furthermore, seeing Moses by faith endured as he that saw God; we learn that the seeing of God by faith takes away fear, and gives spiritual boldness. This is a point of special use; for naturally men are fearful; some cannot endure the dark, nor solitary places, for fear of the devil; yea, the shaking of a leaf, or the crawling of a worm doth terrify others. Now howsoever some men's constitutions may help forward this fear, yet many times it doth come from an accusing conscience, as a fruit of sin. And the way to remove it is here to be learned; namely, to do as Moses did; that is, labour to be resolved of

God's presence with us, and providence over us; and this will arm us against all satanic and foolish fear. For if God be on our side, who can be against us to do us harm? Again, the soldier by his place and calling ought to be a man of courage; for else the state of his life and the thought of his enemies will much affright him. Now how may he become courageous? They used to sound the drum and trumpet for this end; and it must be granted they are good incitements and provocations unto battle; but when it comes to the point of danger, they cannot give heart. Others use against the battle to fill themselves with wine; and to make themselves valiant by strong drink. This indeed may make them senseless and so desperate. But the true way is to become Christian soldiers, knowing and fearing God; and with their bodily armour to bring also the shield of faith; whereby their hearts may be assured that God hath called them to that fight; and that He is present with them to cover their heads in the day of battle. This will make them to take heart and courage to themselves, and to become truly valorous, though by nature they may be weak and timorous.

Thirdly, who knows whether God will bring us to this trial; either to lay down our lives, or forsake His truth; for He may justly take from us these golden days of peace for our ingratitude. Now, if such times come upon us, what shall we do? Shall we deny the faith of Christ? God forbid. But how shall we stand out in such trial? Surely, we must follow Moses, and labour to see Him that is invisible, by faith. This will make us courageous, and without fear in God's cause; remembering this also, that among those which are reckoned to go down to hell, the fearful man is one (Rev. 21:8), who dares not stand to the truth of God, but for fear of men denies it. Let us therefore now begin to settle our hearts in the assurance of God's providence and protection; that so when trial comes, we may be bold in the cause of God.

Him that is invisible.

That is, God, who is a most simple essence, void of all composition or corporal substance; for God is a Spirit (John 4:24), and therefore invisible, and not subject to man's senses. But some will say, God is said to have head, heart, hands and feet, with other parts of man's body, and therefore He is visible. Answer: The Holy Ghost so speaketh in Scripture of God, by way of resemblance of Him unto man, that we might the better thereby conceive of His works; for therefore are the parts of man's body ascribed unto God in Scripture, that we might know He doth such works by His divine power, as man doth by the parts of his body. Man sheweth his strength and valour in his arm; and by resemblance unto man, God is said to have an arm, to note out His power and valiant acts. And so God is said to have eyes, because we should conceive that by His infinite wisdom He seeth all things more clearly than man doth anything at noonday with his bodily eyes. And so of the rest.

But Moses is said to talk with God face to face, and to see His back parts (Exod. 33:11, 23). Answer: This imports not that he saw the substance of God; but only that God did after a familiar manner reveal Himself unto him, and in some resemblance shew him His glory, so far forth as Moses was able to behold it; for the text is plain, My face cannot be seen. There shall no man see me and live (v.20).

Here we learn that when we pray to God, we must not conceive of Him by any form or image in our minds; for so we make an idol of God. Question: What then must we do? For how (some will say) can I pray to Him, and not think of Him? Answer: When we think of God, or pray to Him, we must conceive of Him in our minds as He hath revealed Himself in Scripture; that is, by His works, and by His properties; we must think in our minds of an eternal essence, most

holy, wise, etc., who made all things, and who governs them by His mighty power. For every image to resemble God by, either to the mind, or to the eye, is a plain lie; making Him visible, who is invisible; as saith the prophet (Hab. 2:18), The image, what profiteth it? For it is a teacher of lies. Which flatly overthroweth the opinion and practice of the Romish church, who resemble the true God, even God the Father, and the Holy Trinity, in images; what else do they herein, but make a lie of God?

But the papists say they devise no image to resemble God in, but only such whereby He hath shewed Himself, as the Scripture testifies: as the Father, like an old man; the Son, as He was incarnate; and the Holy Ghost, like a dove (Matt. 3:16). Answer: We must not conceive of those forms, of an old man, or of a dove, to have been ever any image of the Father, or of the Holy Ghost; but only signs and pledges for a time, whereby those Persons did then manifest their presence. Now, there being an express commandment against all representation of God by images, not excepting those very shapes whereby it pleased God for a time to signify His presence; it must needs be idolatrous presumption to make any image of God, or of the Trinity. And indeed God being invisible (as the text saith), it is impossible to make any true image or resemblance of Him.

“Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.” Hebrews 11:28.

In the former verses, the author of this epistle hath shewed unto us the notable faith of Moses by two worthy acts: 1. His refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, 2. His departing out of Egypt. Now here in this verse He commends his faith unto us by a third action; which is, the ordination, or celebrating of the Passover. This verse is the sum of the twelfth chapter of Exodus; the effect whereof is this: After that God had sent nine several plagues upon the land of Egypt, which were occasions to harden Pharaoh’s heart; at last He sends Moses to certify Pharaoh that unless he would let the people go, He would send a tenth plague, which should be more grievous to them than all the former; even the slaughter of all the firstborn in Egypt, both of man and beast. Yet Pharaoh’s heart was not softened, neither did he let the people go. Therefore Moses departed from him, and (according to God’s commandment) assembled the elders of Israel together, and causeth them to kill every man a lamb of a year old, and to eat it roast with fire; and to take the blood, and to sprinkle it upon the doorposts and upon the posts of their houses, for a sign unto them that the angel of the Lord (seeing the blood sprinkled upon their doors) should pass over them, and touch none of their first born, neither man nor beast. This is the sum and meaning of that history. Now let us come to the consideration of this fact more particularly:

I. And first, to the meaning of the words of this verse, because there is some difficulty in them.

Through faith he ordained the Passover.

The Passover here named may be thus described: It is one of the sacraments of the Old Testament, serving for a sign to the people of Israel, both of their temporal deliverance from the bondage of Egypt and from the slaughter of the firstborn; and also of their spiritual deliverance from everlasting death by the sacrifice of Christ Jesus the immaculate lamb of God.

Touching this description: First, I call it one of the sacraments of the Old Testament because they had besides this circumcision, another ordinary sacrament. Next I say, it served for a sign to the people of Israel, to shew that it was properly a sacrament unto them. For it is of the nature of a sacrament to signify and seal up some blessing of God to His people; now that the Passover did so is plain, where the Lord calls it a sign or token of deliverance unto them. But some will say, this Passover was a sacrifice; for so it is called: This is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, and, Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread etc. Answer: It is called a sacrifice because it was killed, also the blood thereof was sprinkled, and some part of it, as the fat with the two kidneys, were burnt in sacrifice to the Lord. For when Josiah kept that famous Passover with all the people, the priests that slew the Passover and sprinkled the blood thereof, did first take away that which was to be consumed with fire, and then gave to the people according to the divisions of their families, as Moses appointed. Now in regard of these properties of a sacrifice which were in the Passover, it is truly called a sacrifice. And yet more properly it was a sacrament, because it was a visible sign of special blessings from the Lord.

But what did this sacrament of the Passover signify? Answer: It did signify a double deliverance: one temporal, as well from the destroying angel as also from the bondage of Egypt; the other spiritual, from the curse of the law and from the wrath of God. The

first is plain, where the Lord saith, The blood being sprinkled upon the doorposts, shall be a token for you that I will pass over you; and (v.17), Ye shall keep the feast of unleavened bread; for that same day will I bring your armies out of the land of Egypt. And touching the second, that it was a sign of a more heavenly deliverance from the bondage of sin and Satan, Paul telleth us plainly, when as he saith, Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7); giving us to understand that the Paschal lamb in the Old Testament, was undoubtedly a true sign of the true Paschal lamb, Christ Jesus; to which purpose John Baptist saith, Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Where He calleth Christ the lamb of God, making there an opposition between Him and the Paschal lamb of Moses, which may be called the Paschal lamb of men; for herein also they differ. The Paschal lamb was separated by men, though by God's appointment; but Christ the true lamb of God, was set apart before all worlds, by God the Father. And thus we see briefly what this Passover is.

It followeth,

Ordained the Passover.

The word translated ordained, signifieth, He made, or did celebrate; for the better understanding whereof, we must have recourse to the Evangelists. Matthew setteth down Christ's speech to His disciples about the Passover, which He kept with them a little before His passion, thus: My time is come, I will make my Passover at thine house (Matt. 26:18). Now St Luke, repeating the same story, mentioneth first the killing of it, then the eating of it; by which two words he explaineth what Christ meant by making (which here is translated ordaining) the Passover; to wit, first, the killing and preparing of the Paschal lamb, and then the eating of it as the Lord's

sacrament. But this is a strange kind of speech (will some say). How can the Passover be killed or eaten, seeing properly the Passover is nothing else, but the act of the angel passing over the houses of the Israelites, when he smote the firstborn in every house of the Egyptians? Answer: the phrase is improper, yet it must not seem strange, because it is usual in scripture, in treating of the sacraments, sometimes to give the name of the sign to the thing signified; as (1 Cor. 5:7), Christ is called our Passover; and on the other side, to give the name of the thing signified to the sign; as in this place, He ordained the Passover, that is, the Paschal lamb, which was a sign of the angels passing over their houses. So, This is my body, that is, a sign of my body. The rock was Christ. The reason of these figurative speeches, whereby one thing is put for another, is the sacramental union of the sign with the thing signified; which yet is not natural according to place, either by change of the sign into the thing signified, or by including the thing signified in the sign, or fastening it upon it; but respective and analogical, by reason of that agreement and proportion which is between the sign and the thing signified; which stands in this, that look when the outward sign is presented to the outward senses, at the very same time the thing signified is thereby, as by certain visible words, presented to the mind. And indeed look what conjunction is between words and the things spoken of in the mind of the understanding hearer; the same is between sacramental signs and the things signified, in the mind of a discerning receiver. But when words of sense are spoken to the ear, the understanding mind doth therewith apprehend the thing spoken of. And even so the mind of the discerning receiver doth inwardly apprehend the thing signified and apply it to his soul, when the sacramental sign is presented to the outward sense. And this conjunction ariseth not from the nature, either of the sign, or the thing signified; but from the institution of the Lord. The meaning then of the Holy Ghost here is this: That Moses by faith did ordain

and appoint the killing and eating of the Paschal lamb, which was the sign of the passing over of the Lord's angel, when the firstborn in Egypt were slain.

It followeth:

And effusion of blood.

That is, the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal lamb; which was a notable rite and ceremony used in this first Passover, after this manner: the blood of every lamb was put into a basin, and sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop upon the doorposts of every man's house among the Jews. Now this rite did not continue always, but was peculiar and proper to this first Passover kept in Egypt at the institution thereof, being then practised (but not after) in regard of that special deliverance then at hand whereof it was an assurance; for it signified unto them that the angel of the Lord, coming to destroy the first born of Egypt, and seeing that blood so sprinkled, should pass over their houses and touch none of their first born, of man nor beast. This end of the sprinkling of this blood is here likewise set down in these words: Lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. He, that is the angel of the Lord, who was sent to destroy the firstborn throughout all Egypt, both of man and beast, save only of those who had their doorposts sprinkled with blood. And thus much for the meaning of the words.

II. By faith.

1. First, observe what the Holy Ghost saith of this fact of Moses in ordaining the Passover; namely, that he did it by faith. Hence we learn that the sacraments of the New Testament must be celebrated in faith; for herein we are to seek to be acceptable to God as Moses was. The Lord's Supper in the New Testament succeedeth the

Passover in the Old; for that was a sign to the Jews that Jesus Christ, the immaculate lamb of God, should afterwards be sacrificed for their sins; and this is to us a sign of Christ already sacrificed. Now look as that was ordained and received under the law, so must this be administered and received under the gospel. But in the Old Testament, Moses celebrates the Passover through faith, and enjoins the Israelites so to do; therefore accordingly must we by faith celebrate and receive the Lord's Supper under the gospel. Cain's sacrifice was fruitless to him, and odious to God, because he offered it not in faith; and no less were all other faithless sacrifices. Even so every sacrament and spiritual sacrifice received or offered in time of the gospel, is unprofitable to man, and unacceptable unto God, if it be not received in faith. In every sacrament we receive something from God, as in every sacrifice we give something to God. In the Lord's Supper, as the minister gives the bread and wine into the hand of the receiver, so the Lord God gives His Son unto their hearts. Now, if faith be wanting, Christ crucified is not received; for faith is the hand of the soul, without which there is no receiving of Christ and His benefits; but contrariwise, an heavy and fearful sin, heaping up God's wrath against us. Hereby we learn how sundry sorts of people sin most grievously against God:

(1) For many come to receive the Lord's Supper who are altogether ignorant in the nature and use thereof, not knowing what the sacrament meaneth; and yet because it is a custom in the church, they will receive at least once a year, though they know nothing therein as they ought. Now such persons must know that they ought to come in faith; which they cannot do because they want knowledge; and therefore in receiving it so, they commit a grievous sin, and so endanger their own souls, because they receive it unworthily. And this is not the fault of young ones only; but of many whose years

might shame them for their ignorance, if they were not past all feeling of spiritual wants.

(2) A second sort there are who receive the Lord's Supper, and say they will do so, because they have faith. But these are like the former; for their faith is nothing but honest dealing amongst men; thinking that if they bring that to the Lord's Supper, though they have no more, yet all is well. The greatest sort are of this mind, taking fidelity for true faith; and it is a plain point of popery, so common, as almost in every place men do embrace it. But these deceive themselves; for another kind of faith is required of those that receive the Lord's Supper worthily; namely, such a faith whereby we do not only believe the remission of sins in Christ's blood; but also are assured that the bread and wine received worthily, are signs and seals of the same blessing exhibited unto us by Christ. He that comes only in a good meaning, deceives himself, and receives to his condemnation. And yet alas, many even of the ancient sort, have no other faith, but their good meaning.

(3) A third sort there are, who yet go further; and knowing the vanity of this opinion, that a man's fidelity in his dealings with men should be his faith to commend him unto God; they hold and know that true faith is to believe their own salvation in the blood of Christ; and these are to be commended in respect of the former. But herein they fail; that coming to receive, they bring not with them a lively faith; for it is not only required in a commandment, that he profess the faith of Christ aright, but a worthy receiver must look to his own heart, that his faith therein be a living faith, such as worketh by love, and shews itself by obedience. Now herein, many that have good knowledge do grievously offend, that howsoever they make a shew of faith, in an orderly and religious carriage of themselves on the Communion day; yet when that time is a little past, they resume to their former sins

again, never else having any care (nay, not so much as making any shew) of laying away their sins, save only at the receiving of the Lord's Supper. And thus do too many of those who make a fair profession. These men bring faith in profession, but yet their faith is dead; for, if it were a lively faith, it would purify their hearts, and cause a change in them from evil to good, and from good to better, every day more and more.

(4) But blessed be God, by whose mercy it comes to pass, that there are some in His church, who come with such a faith, and thereby communicate acceptably to God, and fruitfully to themselves. Yet we must confess they are but few in comparison. But as for all the other three sorts of people, they sin grievously, because they bring not the hand of a lively faith, to receive those things which their God offereth unto them. We therefore in this example are admonished to celebrate and receive the Lord's Supper in such sort as Moses did; namely, in faith; which may both before and after the receiving of this sacrament, bring forth good fruits to the reforming of our lives, in continual obedience of God's glory, and our own comfort and salvation in Christ.

2. Observe further:

Moses ordained the Passover.

We may not think that Moses killed all the lambs that were to be slain at this Passover; but in his own family he killed his own lamb, and enjoined the people from God to do the like in theirs. The like phrase is often used in Scripture: (Josh 5:3) Joshua is said to circumcise the sons of Israel; which was almost a thing impossible for one man to do; but the meaning thereof is this: that Joshua enjoined and procured that all the people should be circumcised, and saw it done. And so must we understand this place.

Now in this, that Moses did in this manner celebrate the Passover, we are taught this lesson: that governors and superiors in their place, must procure that those who are under their government, do keep the commandments of God; and especially those which concern God's worship. It is the commandment of the Lord by Moses that the king should have the law written; that he may learn to fear his God, and keep all the words of this law written, to do them. Now, how shall the king do all the words of the law, seeing there be many commandments that do not concern him, nor his place, but his subjects, and other particular men of their callings. Surely thus: He must do those in his own person, that concern him in his place, and then see that his subjects and servants do likewise such duties both towards God and man, as concern them in their places. This is a special point concerning all magistrates and superiors whatsoever; and therefore St Paul saith (Rom. 13:4), The magistrate beareth not the sword for naught, but for the wealth of God's people; that is, for their good, not in body only, but principally for the good of their souls. And therefore every governor, either of town or kingdom, and every master of a family, within the compass of his calling, is to see that those which are under him keep God's commandments; especially those concerning God's worship. When a magistrate shall do this, then the praise and honour of the whole is given to him; as here the killing of the Passover is ascribed to Moses, because he saw that the people did it. So on the contrary, if the magistrate be negligent in this duty, he becomes the greatest sinner of all; for then the sins that are committed through his default, are ascribed to him. Nehemiah, reproving the rulers, tells them that they brake the Lord's Sabbath (Neh. 13:15), when as not only they, but the people also brake them; yet there he chargeth the sin of the people upon them, because it came through their negligence. As if any sin be committed in a family through the defect of the governor of the family; it is not only the sin of the particular party, but the governor's sin. And so,

when any man sins in breaking the Sabbath, it is not only the sin of that particular man, but of the governor's to whom he is subject. And therefore governors must see that God's commandments be kept of those that be under their government. But here some may object (as indeed some abuse the place to this end) that it seems no man may be barred from the Lord's Supper; for the like reason is in the Lord's Supper that was in the Passover; but Moses kept the Passover himself, and commanded all the people of Israel so to do; therefore no man is to be put from God's table. Answer: It is true indeed that in Egypt at the celebration of the first Passover, Moses kept it himself, and commanded every master of a family among the Israelites to do the same; and the reason hereof was, because at the first institution the Passover was both a sign and a means of a temporal deliverance, besides the spiritual; and therefore there was great reason then, why all the Israelites should eat the Passover, and none be put back, because all of them were to escape the temporal punishment which God was to inflict upon the Egyptians. But afterwards the Lord made a law, that if any were but legally unclean, he might not eat the Passover, but must stay till the next month and then come, and only the clean must eat thereof; so that the Lord Himself did inhibit some from that sacrament; whereby it is plain that the celebration of the Passover is so far from giving warrant to this confusion, and careless admitting of all to the communion, that rather it proveth that there must be a distinction made, and a separation of the unworthy from the Lord's table. Those which are fitly prepared are to be received, but notorious offenders, who are morally and spiritually unclean, are to be put back, till by repentance they have testified their worthiness.

Let us consider the signification of the Passover. For the Paschal lamb was a sign of Christ the true lamb of God, shadowing out divers things worthy of our observation: as first the lamb, for the Passover

was to be a lamb of a year old, without spot or blemish; which signified unto us that Christ was that immaculate lamb of God and without spot, as Peter calleth Him (1 Pet. 1:19). Secondly, the Paschal lamb, when he was killed and eaten, had no bone of it broken; so was it commanded (Exod. 12:46 and Num. 9:12), signifying that Christ when He was crucified, should not have a bone of Him broken, as St John applieth the former texts (John 19:36). Thirdly, the Paschal lamb must be eaten with sour herbs (Exod. 12:8), signifying that no man can feel any sweetness in the blood of Christ, till he have his heart full of bitterness for his sins; and with Hannah be sore vexed and troubled in mind, so as he can pour out his soul before the Lord (1 Sam. 1:15). The want of this is the cause why so many do hear God's Word, and receive the sacraments, and yet reap no benefit by them. Fourthly, before the Paschal lamb was eaten, all leaven must be removed out of their houses. This had a notable signification, which we need not to guess at, seeing the Holy Ghost hath set it down; namely, that we must remove all old leaven of corrupt doctrine (Matt. 16:12) out of our hearts; and the leaven of sin and wickedness out of our lives, if we profess communion with Christ. This is a point worth our marking; for unless we do so, we shall have no benefit by the sacrifice of Christ; for if we will live in this old leaven, we must never look to receive Christ into our hearts. Lastly, every person received the Passover in haste, with shoes on their feet, with staves in their hands, and their clothes girt up (Exod. 12:11), yet this we must understand only of the first Passover in Egypt, for Christ did eat sitting. Now this ceremony used in the first Passover signified thus much; that if we look to have benefit by Christ, we must be of this mind, to be always ready to leave this world, and be prepared to go when and whither God shall call us. We must not have our hearts glued to earthly things, but always ready to receive God's command, and to go at His call. These being the significations of the Passover, which we must remember to make good use of in the

course of our lives. And thus much of the first branch of this act of Moses' faith, in ordaining the Passover.

The second branch of this work is this:

3. And the effusion of blood.

That is, the sprinkling of the blood of the lamb upon the posts of their houses, and upon the door cheeks; which was a token to the Israelites that the destroying angel should not strike the firstborn of the Israelites, either man or beast. In man's reason this may seem to be a weak and simple means; yet God ordains it to preserve all the firstborn among the Israelites. And thus the Lord useth to deal, that His people, through the weakness of the means, might be brought to acknowledge God to be their protector and defender. When the Israelites were stung with the serpents, a man would have thought it had been the best way for their curing to have given them cunning surgeons; but the Lord ordains only a dead serpent of brass which they must look up unto, and be cured. A weak means it was, and yet the Lord useth it; because He would have them give all the glory to Him, and not to ascribe the same either to themselves or to the means.

Further, this sprinkling of the blood upon the door cheeks, and the posts of their houses, had a notable signification, namely, of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon the doors of our hearts; to which Peter alludeth (1 Pet. 1:2) Through the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. And David, when he saith, Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be clean (Psa. 51:7). David knew well that the blood of beasts could not take away sin, and therefore no doubt by his saving faith, he had an eye to the blood of the Messiah under legal terms. Whence we are taught this lesson: that as the Israelites with their bodily hands did sprinkle the blood of the

Paschal lamb upon their door cheeks, and the posts of their houses, so by the hand of faith, every one of us must sprinkle the blood of Christ upon our own hearts; which we shall then do when we do not only in general believe that Christ is a Saviour and Redeemer, but particularly that He is a Redeemer unto us; and that the merits of His death, and the benefit of His blood are ours.

Objection: But some will say, If this be so, then all is well, for I do believe this. Answer: herein very many deceive themselves, thinking that they have faith, when indeed they have none. For look unto their ways, and see into their hearts by their lives; and it will easily appear that they have nothing in them but ignorance, security and presumption in sin. Now such men are deceivers of their own souls; for after this sprinkling followeth sanctification, and rising from dead works to newness of life; so that they that live in sin, and yet say they have faith, deceive themselves. For if a man's heart be sprinkled with the blood of Christ through faith, it will change his life and conscience, and make him a new creature; for Christ's blood is a cleansing and purifying blood, insomuch as where it is truly sprinkled, it certainly cleanseth (Heb. 9:14). And thus much of this ceremony of sprinkling.

4. Now followeth the end of both these actions in these words:

Lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Let us examine the words in order:

First, by the destroyer is meant the angel of God (as we may see in the story, Exod. 12:13), who at midnight smote all the firstborn of Egypt of man and beast. Where, by the way, we may take a view of the wonderful power and strength of God's angels, and also of their admirable swiftness and readiness in doing the will of God, that in

one night, even at midnight, one of them could pass through the land of Egypt and kill all the firstborn of man and beast, in every place of the Egyptians. The like we may see in the destruction of Sennacherib's host, by one angel in one night (2 Chr. 32:21).

The firstborn: that is, both of men and beasts. So it is in the story (Exod. 12:29). But, being so, it may not unfitly be demanded, How this Passover could be a sacrament when as even the beasts of the Israelites had benefit by it; for they were spared by reason of this sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal lamb. Answer: That hindereth not why it should not be a sacrament. For we must consider this Passover two ways: First, as a means of temporal deliverance, and so the beasts had benefit by it. Secondly, as a sign and seal of our spiritual deliverance from hell by the sacrifice of the lamb of God, Jesus Christ, which is the thing signified; and so it is a sacrament for man's salvation; and thus the beasts had no benefit by it. The water that flowed from the rock in the wilderness was a sacrament, and the beasts drank of the water, but yet they did not partake of the Lord's sacrament; for we must consider that water two ways: first, as a means to quench thirst, and consequently as an outward benefit to preserve the life of the creature, and so the beasts had a benefit by it; but secondly, consider it as a sign and seal of the water of life, and so their beasts had no benefit by it, but only the believing people.

It followeth: Should touch them. Here is the very use and end of both the former actions; That the angel might not hurt them, but pass by the Israelites' houses. Here consider a notable point concerning Christ the true Passover: namely, that they which have their hearts sprinkled with His blood, shall be preserved from everlasting damnation; and not only so, but hereby they shall have deliverance from all temporal judgments in this life, so far forth as they are curses and hurtful unto them. So we may read before the destruction

came to the cities of the Jews, the angel of God went through the city with a writer's inkhorn, to set a mark upon those that did mourn and cry for their sins (Ezek. 9). And David saith, The righteous man standeth upon a rock, so as the floods of many waters shall not come near him (Psa. 40:2; Psa. 32:6). This is a point of great use; and the consideration hereof should move all persons that have been careless in religion, now to become careful and desirous to have their hearts washed in the blood of Christ; and those also which have any care, must have double care hereof; for they have freedom and security, both in temporal and eternal judgments.

Objection: But many of God's dear children are taken away in common judgments. Answer: True, but they are never hurt thereby; but the judgment and affliction is sanctified unto them, because they have their hearts sprinkled with the blood of Christ. And as for those whom God knoweth it good for, they are delivered in general judgments; and preserved for His glory and use of the church.

But how did the angel destroy the firstborn in Egypt, both of man and beasts? Answer: By taking from them their temporal lives, by destroying or killing their bodies. That is the sense and plain meaning of the Holy Ghost; and to this signification answereth the word in the original. Now some do abuse this place, and such like, for the overthrowing of the ancient censure of the church in excommunication; for (say they) the practice of St Paul (1 Cor. 5) is the principal ground of excommunication; where Paul bids that the incestuous man be given to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Now they that deny excommunication, would have that place to be interpreted by this, because the same word is there used; and therefore (say they) Paul's words must be understood of destroying the incestuous man's body, and taking away his temporal life. This interpretation doth quite overthrow excommunication; for if nothing

else be there understood, but only the tormenting of the body, thence excommunication is not thence proved. But the truth is that the censure which the apostle urgeth there, cannot be understood of the punishment of the body; which I prove thus: In that place, St Paul opposeth the flesh and the spirit. Now usually when he maketh this opposition, flesh signifieth the corruption of the whole man, and the spirit signifieth the grace of God in the man; so that his plain meaning is this: Let him be delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh; that is, for the destruction of his natural corruption and of the body of sin.

Further, where it is said the firstborn, we must understand it of the firstborn of the Egyptians, both of man and beast. And whereas he saith, should touch them, he meaneth the Israelites, who were not touched in this destruction.

Hence we learn two points further:

(1) First, the firstborn of Egypt are destroyed, both of man and beast. This is remarkable; for the Egyptians in former times destroyed the Israelites' children, and especially their firstborn; for they slew all the males, lest they should increase in their land; and now it comes to pass that their children, even the principal of them, their firstborn are slain for the Israelites' sakes; when they are preserved. Where we may observe a most righteous, and yet an unusual kind of judgment with God. He doth often punish the wicked in their kind, with their own sins. This is true even in the best, so far forth as they are sinful. The same injury which David did to Uriah, was done unto him by his own son, even by his son Absalom (2 Sam. 10:10,11; 16:22). And this our Saviour Christ teacheth us (Matt. 7:1), saying, Judge not, that ye be not judged. We find this true likewise by experience; that they that give themselves to backbiting, railing and slandering, by the just

judgment of God, have for the most part the same done unto themselves by others; so that men are often punished in their own sins. For God hath His storehouse full of judgments, and He can punish men what way He will. But He often observeth this order: to punish men by their own sins, and to catch the wicked in their own devices.

(2) This must be a motive to look unto ourselves, and to have care against all sins of the second table; for look wherein thou takest thy pleasure to God's dishonour, therein thou shalt feel and see God's judgements upon thee, to thy correction and confusion (Psa. 109:17), As he loved cursing, so shall it come unto him; and as he loved not blessing, so shall it be far from him. This Adonibezek felt and confessed when his thumbs were cut off (Jud. 1:6,7). As I have done, so God hath rewarded me. Lastly, in that the destroyer killeth the firstborn of Egypt, mark a strange kind of God's judgments. King Pharaoh and his people sin, because they will not let the Israelites go; but the punishment of their sin is laid upon their children and cattle. The like we read of (2 Sam. 12:14) when David had committed those grievous sins of adultery and murder, a part of his punishment was the death of his child. When he numbered the people, the plague light on them (2 Sam 24). Now we must not too curiously pry into the reason of God's judgments; for He is not bound to give account of His actions; and yet in reason we may see the equity thereof. For we must consider of kingdoms and societies, and of towns and families, as of bodies; every society is a body, and the particular persons therein are members of that body. Now look, as it is in the natural body, so it is in the body civil or politick. Oftentimes in the natural body, when the stomach is sick, the heart acheth; the foot is hurt and the head acheth; and the offence of the tongue may be punished with stripes upon the back. Even so it is in civil societies, the prince sinneth, and the people are punished; or the people sin, and the

prince is punished. This is no injustice with God, for sith the prince and people make but one body, and so parents and children; God may justly lay upon any member the temporal punishment of sin committed by another. And thus much of this example, and of the faith of Moses alone.

“By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.” Hebrews 11:29.

Hitherto, we have heard the faith of Moses alone highly commended in two examples. Now followeth a commendation of his faith with others; so that here is a new example of faith; to wit, of the Israelites together with Moses. For Moses is here to be considered not only as one of them, but as a principal agent in this work of faith. And here their faith is commended to us by a wonderful strange action which they did, through the power and goodness of God; namely, by their passing through the Red Sea; not by passing over it, for that might have been by art; but through it; which is above nature and art, and merely miraculous. This fact of theirs is largely set down in Exod. 14. And that it might appear to be every way wonderful, as it is indeed, the author of this epistle commends it by two circumstances; which notably set forth unto us the strangeness hereof; first, by their manner, how they passed through, namely, as by dry land; secondly, by the time when, namely then, when the Egyptians following them were drowned. Here first we will speak of the fact itself, and then of the circumstances.

I. The fact is set down in the first words:

By faith they passed through the Red Sea.

The words are plain of themselves, and offer unto us sundry points worthy of our observation:

1. And first, it may be asked, who they were that here passed through by faith? The answer is, the Israelites. But some will say, we read in

the history that when the people came to the Red Sea they were wonderfully afraid, and murmured against Moses, saying that it had been better for them to have lived in the bondage of Egypt than to come into the desert and there die. Now how can they murmur impatiently and fearfully, and yet pass through by faith? Answer: At the first indeed they murmured, when they saw the danger they were in, having the huge army of Pharaoh following them, and the Red Sea before them, and hills and mountains on each side. But howsoever they murmured at the first, yet when Moses spake words of comfort unto them in the name of the Lord, bidding them not to be afraid etc., and when he held up his rod and entered into the Red Sea before them, then they followed him by faith; and hereupon the Holy Ghost gives unto them the title of true believers.

(1) Here we may learn that true faith in God's children is mingled with unbelief. The Israelites' faith was true faith, but yet it was very imperfect and weak; for if it had been perfect and sound faith, they would never have murmured, nor have been impatient and fearful. But look as it is in nature, so it is in grace. In nature we cannot pass from one contrary to another, but by the mixture of the contraries; as in light and darkness, the one doth not follow the other immediately; but first, there is a mixture of them both in the dawning of the day and closing of the night; and so it is in other contraries, even in those which concern the soul; unbelief is a sin, faith is a virtue and grace contrary to it. Now unbelief cannot be expelled by faith, before there be a mixture of them both, and so when faith prevaieth, unbelief decayeth; neither can faith be ever perfect, because it is ever mingled more or less with unbelief.

This plainly overthrows the opinion of the church of Rome, who say that after a man is regenerate and believes, there is nothing in him that God can hate. For they imagine that he is soundly sanctified,

that there is nothing in him which may properly be called a sin; but here we see their doctrine is false, seeing faith and unbelief are always mingled together.

(2) Secondly, as it falls out with faith, so it is with the rest of God's graces; look as faith is not perfect, but mixed with unbelief; so are all other graces of God whatsoever. The fear of God is not perfect in a man, nor the love of God; for the fear of God is mingled with the fear of men; and the fear of God for His mercy, is mingled with the fear of God for His judgments. And hereby many are deceived; for when they fear God for His punishments, they think themselves to be most miserable and void of grace, but they deceive themselves. For there is no man upon the earth that feareth God only for His mercies, and doth not fear God also for His punishments in part; for God's graces in this life are ever mingled with their contraries. And therefore to imagine that a man may fear God for His mercies only, and not for judgments also, is to conceive of such a man as none is, nor can be in this life; for the best fear that is in any man living, is a mixed fear.

(3) Further, when Moses had spoken words of comfort unto them, the unbelieving and fearful Israelites do stir up their hearts to believe. So we accordingly must labour and strive against that inbred unbelief which is in us; for every man hath innumerable sins in him that resist faith; and if they be not checked and suppressed, they will master his faith; but he that would have faith to continue and last, must strive against natural unbelief, as the Israelites do in this place; and as the man in the gospel (Mark 9:24), when he saith to Christ, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief, knowing that his unbelief did suppress his faith. And so did the disciples of our Saviour Christ, when they prayed, Lord, increase our faith (Luke 17:5). And David, being oppressed with deadness of heart, stirs up his faith, saying, Why art thou cast down my soul etc. Wait on God (Psa. 42:11). For he

that hath faith, is troubled with unbelief; and the more it troubles him, the less he believeth, unless he strive against it manfully.

2. 2nd Question: But how many of the Israelites believed and went over by faith? Answer: Not all; for Paul saith, With many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:5). Which shews that all that passed over had not true faith; for some believed; and by the force of their faith, all went over safely.

Hence we note this (which hath been often taught us), that an ungodly man receiveth many temporal benefits by the society of God's people which believe; as here the unbelieving Israelites had this benefit, to go through the Red Sea safely, by reason of those that believed. And in the former example, the brute beasts were freed from killing by the angel, because they belonged to the host of the Lord's people. Now shall a brute beast have benefit by being with God's people, and shall not a man much more? Yes undoubtedly; for so we may read that for Paul's sake, all the mariners and soldiers that were in the ship, were saved from drowning (Acts 27:24). This point must persuade every one of us to make choice of the godly for our society and company, with whom we live and converse, for by them we do reap many benefits, and freedom also from many heavy judgments.

3. The third point is this: When did the Israelites believe? This circumstance is worth the marking. They believed when they passed through the Red Sea; for they believed not only in general that God was their God, as He had promised to their fathers; but they believed that God would be with them, and give them life in the midst of the Red Sea. A notable point. They believed (as it were) in the middle of their graves (for so might the Red Sea be well called), that God would

give them life everlasting, and preserve them safely through the sea, and from their enemies.

In their example we are taught the same duty, to do as they here did. The child of God in this life hath innumerable causes of desperation; and sometimes his own conscience will take part with Satan in charging the soul to be in a state of damnation. In this heavy case, what must be done? Surely at this time, when a man is a castaway in himself, he must even then believe; being in hell (as it were) he must believe that God will bring him to heaven. It is nothing for a man to believe in prosperity and peace; but in time of desperation to believe, that is a most worthy faith; and indeed, then is the right time for a man to shew his faith, when there is in himself no cause of believing.

Objection: But when a man is in this case, he cannot believe. Answer: Indeed to believe then is a wonderfully hard thing, and a miracle of miracles. But yet this is the property of true faith so to do; and if there be but one dram of true faith in the heart that despairs, howsoever it may for a time lie hid as dead; yet at length it will make him to hope, and wait for mercy and life at the hands of Almighty God. And therefore, if it shall please God at any time to lay a torment upon our consciences, so as we shall strive with the wrath of God, thinking that He hath cast us away; yet for all that, then we must believe God's promises, and set before us His mercies, and therewith refresh us. And if this faith were not, the child of God many times were in a most miserable case; the Lord therefore hath most mercifully provided to help him by the grace of faith. When a man is past all hope of life, he must then believe and hope for life, as the Israelites did in the Red Sea for preservation. And undoubtedly this is a most comfortable sign of grace, if a man in the horror of conscience can shew forth the least spark of true faith.

4. Fourthly, note the effect and issue of this faith: They passed through the Red Sea. We say usually that water and fire be unmerciful creatures; and therefore the natural man fears them both; but the Israelites' faith makes them not to fear the water; but it makes them bold, even to pass through the sea. The like we may see for fire in the three children (Dan. 3:16,23), who were not afraid of the hot burning oven, but were as bold in it as out of it. Ravenous and wild beasts are terrible unto men, but faith makes a man not to fear them; and therefore Daniel feared not the lions, though he were thrown into their den to be devoured (Dan. 6:22). Great is the fruit and force of faith; it takes from a man the dear of those creatures which by nature are most terrible. And here we see a cause why the holy martyrs of God died most cheerfully. A man would think it strange that one should go into the fire rejoicing, as many of them did; but the reason is because they had faith in their hearts, which taketh away the fear of the most fearful creatures.

But if it be so (may some say), that the Israelites by faith went through the Red Sea, not fearing the water; why may not we that believe now do the same, for we have the same faith that they had? Answer: We have indeed the same faith, and yet we cannot pass through waters as they did. For their faith rested on two promises: first, on this made to Abraham, I will be thy God and the God of thy seed; secondly, on a particular promise made to Moses. For when He commanded him to go through the Red Sea, withal He made a promise to keep and preserve them; and this they believed, and so went through. Now howsoever we have justifying faith, having the same general promise; yet we have not the like particular promise, that if we pass through the Red Sea, God will be with us and save us. And therefore, if any man shall adventure to do so, let him look for nothing but death; for it is not an action of faith, but presumption. And therefore Peter sunk when he would needs walk unto Christ

upon the sea, having no such hold upon God's special promise as here they had; and the Egyptians following presumptuously were all drowned. Wherefore let us here be warned not to attempt to do extraordinary works without God's special warrant; for a particular faith requires a particular promise besides the general promise of God in Christ.

Further, let us here observe a wonderful work of God's mercy and power. When these servants of God were brought into extremity of danger, so as they were in a desperate case for their temporal life; yet then the Lord finds a way of deliverance. And indeed, if a man consider aright of it, he must needs acknowledge that these Israelites were in a pitiful case; for they had the Red Sea before them, and mountains on each side, and themselves hindered from flight by their bag and baggage, and with their children, and the huge host of Pharaoh behind them; so as to man's reason there was nothing but present death to be looked for; yet the Lord in mercy to save them, makes a way where there was no way, and openeth them a gap to life, when natural reason could lay before them nothing but violent death. Which shews the wonderful mercy of God to His own people and servants. And the like thing we may read of David when he abode in the wilderness of Maon; for there Saul followed him, and he and his men compassed David and his men round about (1 Sam. 23:26,27). Now what hope of deliverance was there for David? Answer: Surely this only: David was the servant of God, and the Lord preserved him, that he might rule His people after Saul's death; and therefore he escapeth, though wonderfully; for a messenger came to Saul, and bids him haste, for the Philistines invaded the land; and so Saul returned from pursuing David, and went against the Philistines.

Hence we learn this general rule; that in the extremity of all danger, God hath means to preserve and save His own children and people.

Which must teach us to commend our case to God, and to rest on Him in all dangers; for when our case is desperate in our sight, then are we fittest for God's help. Let us therefore in such cases learn to practice our faith; and then especially to cast ourselves upon God. This Jehosaphat did most notably; for being assaulted with the huge armies of the Moabites, Ammonites etc., he prayed unto the Lord most fervently (2 Chr. 20:12), saying, Lord there is no strength in us, we know not what to do, but our eyes are towards thee; and thus doing, was preserved; for God will in no extremity whatsoever forsake them that trust in Him.

The Red Sea.

In many places of the Old Testament it is called the sea of rushes (Psa. 106:7,9), or the sea of sedges (Jer. 49:21). It is a corner of the Arabian Sea that parteth Egypt and Arabia. Those which have seen it in travel, say it hath no other colour than all other seas have. Why then is it called the Red Sea? Answer: To omit many supposed causes hereof, there be two especially, for which it is so called: First, because of the red sand; for both the bottom of the sea and the shore are full of redder sand than ordinarily is elsewhere. Secondly, some think it is called the Red Sea by reason of the sedges and bulrushes which grow much at the seaside, and be of a red colour; which by reflection, may make the same colour appear on the water. But this need not to trouble any man; for the Holy Ghost useth the same name which commonly the men of that country gave it. And thus much of their fact, that they by faith passed through the Red Sea.

II. Now we come to the two circumstances whereby it is commended.

1. The first circumstance is the manner of their going through the Red Sea: They went through as on dry land. This must not be conceived to be by the help of bridge or ship, nor by means which

men use, such as swimming, sailing or wading; but their passage was miraculous; for the waters stood like walls on both sides of them. And the channel of the sea was as a pavement or dry land (Exod. 14:22). Which noticeably setteth forth the strangeness of this act, shewing that it was a wonderful work of God. And this also confuteth certain enemies of the Scripture, who have cavilled at all the miracles which are recorded therein; accounting of Moses but as a magician and sorceror, and of the miracles which he did, as of illusions; and for this miracle they make no account of it; for, say they, Moses being a great scholar and a wise man, knew the time of the rise and fall of the waters, and knew the fords and shallow places; therefore he took his time, and found a place so shallow, that when the tide was past, the sands were bare and dry (as the marshes in England are), and then he led the host of Israel through. But Pharaoh and his host following them were drowned, because they went through at the flowing of the sea. Answer: Whereas they say that this their passage was no miracle, here we see it is overthrown by this circumstance of the manner of their passing over: for the bottom of the sea was a pavement, and as ground on which no waters fall. Now in most places of the sea where the waters ebb and flow, the ground is never fully dry, but watery and full of moist places.

Again, the waters passed not away as at an ebb, but stood as walls on each side of the host of Israel, both on the right hand and on the left; both which shew plainly that there was no advantage taken by the ebbing and flowing of the water (as ungodly atheists do cavil, deriding God's works to their own destruction), but a mighty and miraculous work of God, first making the waters stand like two walls, and then making the earth under it firm and dry, contrary to nature in them both.

2. The second circumstance is concerning the time when he passed through; even then when the Egyptians assaying to do, the same were drowned. Mark the words, for the thing is strange; the Egyptians come armed after the Israelites, with a huge great army. Now the Israelites they take into the sea, and the Egyptians seeing them, stand not still upon the bank, but adventure after them, not by ship, but the same way that the Israelites took before them; but yet without any warrant or commandment from God; so great was their malice against them; and yet a man would have thought they durst never have adventured into the sea after them, as they did.

(1) Here by this fact of Pharaoh and his men, we learn that when God forsakes a man and leaves him to himself, he doth nothing else but run headlong to his own destruction. God, as Moses saith, raised up Pharaoh to shew His power upon him; and now it pleaseth God to leave him to himself, and he pursueth the Israelites to his own destruction. And this is the course and state of all those that are forsaken of God. The consideration whereof must teach us a special clause to be used of us in our prayers: we must ever remember to pray for this, that God would never wholly forsake us nor call us off. This condition is more fearful than the state and condition of any creature in the world besides; for when God forsakes a man, all that he doth is hastening himself to his own destruction. David knew this well, and therefore he prays, Oh knit my heart unto thee, that I may fear thy name (Psa. 86:11). And again, he prayeth that the Lord would not forsake him overlong (Psa. 119:8), as if he should say, If it be thy pleasure to try me by leaving me to myself, yet Lord let it be but for a while, forsake me not overlong. This is the scope of the sixth petition, Lead us not into temptation; where we are taught to pray that God would not forsake us or leave us to ourselves, or to the power of Satan; but that He would be with us, and shew His power in our weakness continually. And this may enforce us unto this petition;

for the consideration that men forsaken of God do nothing but work their own destruction, is many times a cause of great trouble of mind. For some desiring to see such as hang or drown themselves, by beholding of them get this conceit in their heads, that God will likewise forsake them as he hath done these whom they behold; and so shall they make away themselves; whence followeth great trouble and anguish of soul for a long time. Now, how must a man or woman in this case help themselves? Answer: The best way is by prayer to crave at God's hands that He would ever be with them, and never wholly forsake them. And further, this must be remembered withal: that God will never forsake any of His servants before they first forsake Him. And therefore they that can say truly and unfeignedly that they desire to serve God, and to be His servants, and seek His blessing by prayer; they may stand fast on this ground: That God will never forsake them till they first forsake Him. And therefore Azariah the prophet saith notably to king Asa (2 Chr. 15:2), The Lord will be with you while you be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you. And James saith, Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you (Jam. 4:8). It was never heard that God did ever forsake any that did seek Him. And if the causes were known why men make away themselves, it would prove (generally) to be thus, because they first by some fearful sins have forsaken God; and then He in His justice forsakes them. And therefore they that are troubled with this temptation, must pray earnestly that they may stick fast unto God by faith and holiness; and so will He never forsake them.

(2) Secondly, in this circumstance that the Egyptians following the Israelites were drowned, we have a notable pattern of the state and condition of all persecutors of God's church. In Pharaoh and his host we may see their end, which is usually destruction; that is their reward for persecuting God's church. Cain slays Abel, that notable

servant of God; but his reward was this, he was cast forth of God's church (Gen. 4:11-13), and stricken in God's just judgments, with final desperation. Saul persecuted David; but his end was to kill himself with his own sword (1 Sam. 31:4). And Jezebel, she persecutes the prophets and children of God; but her end was this, the dogs did eat her flesh (2 Kin. 9:10). The whole stock of the Herods were great enemies to Christ, but their name was soon rooted out; and Herod called Agrippa, that slew James, and persecuted Peter, was eaten up of worms (Acts 12:23). Many great emperors in the primitive church were persecutors; but they died desperately. And Julian, for one, once a Christian, died blaspheming Christ; and casting his blood up towards heaven, cried, Thou hast overcome, O Galilean, thou hast overcome. And to come near these times, what reward from God the persecutors of the church have had, we may read in the book of Acts and Monuments, which was penned for that purpose. And to come to these out days, the whole band of those that call themselves Leaguers, in France, Italy, Spain etc., like the tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Agarims etc. (Psa. 83:5,6), they vow the destruction and persecution of God's church; but yet God's church stands; and He so contrives the matter that they draw swords against themselves, and slay and poison one another. Herein doth God graciously make good His promise to His church, that the weapons made against her shall not prosper. And (Zech. 12:13) there is a prophecy of the church in the New Testament, the Lord saith, He will make Jerusalem (that is, His church) an heavy stone; for all people that lift it up shall be torn, though all the people of the earth be gathered against it; where the prophet setteth down notably, what shall be the condition of those that persecute God's church; the more they persecute her, the more they shall have God's hand against them to confound them. There is mention made (Dan. 2:34) of a stone hewn out of a rock without hands, which smote the image upon the feet, which were of iron and clay, and brake them to

pieces. By that stone is meant the kingdom of Christ, which shall dash in pieces the kingdoms of the earth, which set themselves against Christ and His kingdom. For Christ must reign till He have put all His enemies under His feet; so that destruction is the end of the enemies of God's church. For the hand of the Lord shall be known among His servants, and His indignation against His enemies (Isa. 66:14). And thus much of the second circumstance.

Now in this whole fact of the Israelites passing through the Red Sea, towards the land of Canaan, there is a notable thing signified: namely, Baptism. So Paul saith, The Israelites were baptised into Moses in the sea (1 Cor. 10:2). Yet we must remember, it was not ordinary baptism, but extraordinary; never administered before, and never shall be so again, for ought we know. The minister of this baptism was Moses; an extraordinary minister, as the baptism was extraordinary. The outward sign was the Red Sea; or rather the water of the Red Sea. The departing of the children of Israel out of Egypt through the Red Sea, signifieth the departing of the children of God out of the kingdom of darkness, from the power of sin and Satan. And the drowning of Pharaoh with all his host in the Red Sea, signifieth the subduing of the power of all spiritual enemies, with the pardon and death of sin; which stands partly in the abolishing of sin, and partly in newness of life. And to this alludeth the prophet Micah, saying, He will subdue our iniquities, and cast all their sins into the bottom of the sea (Mic. 7:19). As if he should say, Look as God subdueth Pharaoh and all his host in the bottom of the sea; so will He cast, and put away the sins of His people.

From this we learn two points:

(1) First, that the baptism of infants hath warrant in God's Word, howsoever some men be of a contrary opinion; for here we see all the

Israelites were baptised in the sea; and among them no doubt were many children. If it be said that this baptism was extraordinary, and is no ground for ours; Answer: True, it was extraordinary for the manner; but yet herein, the matter and substance, and the thing signified is ordinary, and in the end all one with ours; and therefore the baptising of infants in the Red Sea is some warrant for the baptism of infants in the church nowadays.

(2) Secondly, here we may learn another instruction. As the Israelites went through the Red Sea (as through a grave) to the promised land of Canaan; so we must know that the way to the spiritual Canaan, even the kingdom of heaven, is by dying unto sin. This is a special point to be considered of every one of us. We profess ourselves to be Christians, we hear God's Word, and receive the sacraments, which are the outward badges of Christians, and we persuade ourselves of life everlasting after death. Well; if we would have that to be the end of our journey, then we must take the Lord's plain way in this life; which is to die unto all our sins. So it is said, They which are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof (Gal. 5:24); where this duty is enjoined to every Christian; he must crucify the lusts and affections of the flesh, and not live in sin. For a man cannot walk in sin, and so run the broad way to hell, and yet wait for the kingdom of heaven; these two will not stand together. And therefore, if we would walk worthy of the calling of Christianity, we must have care that all our sins, whether they be of heart or life, little or great, new or old, may be mortified and abolished. Many will for a time become civil, and seem to be religious, especially when they are to receive the Lord's Supper; but when that time of the sacrament is past, then they return to their old custom in sinning again; whereby it appears that their change was but in shew, to blind the eyes of men. And do we not each Sabbath profess ourselves good Christians, and seem to glory in it, by keeping this day with such solemnity? But

alas! As soon as that day is past, many (and some even this day) run into all riot. This is not Christianity; this is not the way to heaven; but if ever we think to come to Canaan, we must kill and bury our sins, we must die unto them; or else we shall never come to the end of Christianity, namely, eternal life. And thus much of this circumstance, and also of the example itself.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” Hebrews 11:30.

From the beginning of this chapter to this thirtieth verse, we have heard two sorts of examples of faith: the first, of believers from the beginning of the world to the flood. The second, of such as were from the time of the flood to the giving of the law at Mount Sinai; and of both these, we have hitherto entreated. Now here, and so forward to the end of this chapter, is set down a third order of examples of faith, namely, of such as lived from the time of the giving of the law to the time of the reign of the Maccabees.

This thirtieth verse contains the first example of this rank; namely, the example of Joshua’s faith, and of those that went with him into Canaan. And their faith is commended unto us by a notable fact of theirs: the causing to fall the walls of Jericho; the history whereof we may read at large in Joshua chapter 6. The sum of it is this: Whereas the Israelites came unto Canaan, and could not enter into the land by reason of the strength of Jericho, by which they must needs pass, nor could win it by reason of the huge walls of Jericho; the Lord promiseth to deliver Jericho into their hands; only the people must do this: they must compass about the walls seven days, and carry the Ark of the Lord with them, sounding with ram’s horns, and shout, and so the walls fall down. Now the Lord having made this promise unto them; the Israelites, and especially Joshua, obey His commandment, and believe His promise; and thus doing, by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. Indeed the power of God was the principal cause of this ruin of the walls; but yet because upon their believing God shewed this power, therefore is the downfall of them ascribed unto their faith.

Here are many notable points to be learned:

1. First, whereas the text saith, By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, we may observe the wonderful power of true faith. Joshua and the Israelites believed God's promises, that He would overturn the walls of Jericho; and as they believed, so it came to pass. So our Saviour Christ saith (Matt. 17:20), If a man had but as much faith as a grain of mustard seed, he shall say unto the mountain, remove hence, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto him; signifying that by the power of true faith, such things as are impossible unto man's reason, shall be brought to pass, if God have promised them; as we see in this place, the mighty walls of Jericho fell down by faith, which to man's reason is impossible. So the Lord promiseth to Abraham, that he should be the father of many nations; yes, that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him. This was strange, but Abraham believed it; and as he believed, so it came to pass; for many nations descended from him; and after the time of Christ's ascension, when all the nations of the world were called to the light of the gospel, they were blessed in Christ, the promised seed of Abraham; and therefore is he called the father of the faithful in all nations. And to come unto ourselves; to miserable men it may seem a strange thing that the power of the devil, and the strength of the flesh, should be overcome in us; yet let a man believe this promise of God: God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoso believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16). I say, let him believe this effectually, and he shall find by faith the kingdom of sin and Satan, in his heart and conscience, weakened every day more and more. And therefore St John saith not without cause, This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith (1 John 5:4).

2. Secondly, here observe that among the causes of the change and overthrow of towns, cities and kingdoms, this is one, namely, faith in Gods promises. Many men have written of the change of kingdoms, and do give divers reasons thereof; but most of them omit the principal, and that is faith; by virtue whereof many times kingdoms and towns are brought to ruin and overthrow. God promised to Abraham and to his seed that He would give them the land of Canaan for their inheritance; now, they believed this promise, and here we see it comes to pass as they believed; Jericho by faith is overturned, and the rest of their cities and the people of Canaan dispossessed. So that we see that faith in God's promises is a means to God's people to overturn cities and kingdoms that are enemies to Christ and to His gospel. God hath made a promise unto His church that the whore of Babylon (Rev. 18:2), that is, the kingdom of Antichrist, shall flourish for a while, but after it shall be destroyed; yea, such a ruin shall come unto it, that the kings of the earth, and all great men and merchants shall bewail the destruction thereof. Now this promise being received by faith, and believed of God's church, shall undoubtedly come to pass. It is in some part verified already (for we see some kingdoms and people have renounced the cursed doctrine and tyranny of Rome; and many Christian princes have already shaken off the pope's yoke), yea, and this promise shall come to pass daily more and more. Let all the kings of that sort do what they can, and let the people set themselves never so much against God's church, yet Babylon shall down; for God hath promised so to His church, and His church believeth the same; and therefore by their faith it shall be brought to pass, in despite of the devil.

3. Thirdly, here we learn that when any city, town or kingdom is to make war either in defence of themselves, or in lawful assault upon their enemies; a special means for good success herein, is true faith. Christian policy is a commendable thing in this case; but if policy be

severed from faith, it is nothing. Faith in God's promises of protection and assistance, doth far surpass all worldly wisdom. And therefore good king Jehosaphat, when he was to fight against the huge armies of the Moabites and Ammonites, gives this counsel to his people (2 Chr. 20:20), Put your trust in the Lord your God, and ye shall be assured; believe His prophets, and ye shall prosper; giving a most notable instruction, and shewing that the best help for our defence is faith in God, whereby we rest upon His Word and promise that He will help us; yet this taketh not away the use of means, but it gives the blessing and efficacy unto them. Faith, we know, is called a shield among the spiritual armour of God, whereby a man awards the blows of Satan; and though that be the principal virtue of it, yet is it also a notable shield to defend men, even against their outward visible enemies, and a most strong engine against them to work their overthrow. Hence David saith, he will not be afraid for ten thousand of the people that should beset him round about (Psa. 3:6). They therefore that would defend themselves against their enemies (yea, and overcome them in lawful assault), must embrace and obey true religion; and with Christian policy, join faith in God's promises; for by faith we make God our captain, and through Him we shall do valiantly, and beat down our enemies on every side.

4. Lastly, here we may learn, what a vain thing it is to trust in outward worldly means. The walls of Jericho were both strong and high, and hard it had been to have overthrown them by ordinary means; but yet we see it proved but a vain thing to trust unto them, as the men of Jericho did; for they found but little relief and defence in them; for the Lord lays them flat to the ground; and so the people of Israel went straight forward and took the city. So likewise it is a vain thing to trust to man's strength, or in the strength of an horse, or in the number of men, or in riches, or in gifts of wisdom and

learning, or in any other outward means whatsoever; the reason is because God can overturn them with the least breath of His mouth.

This must admonish us that howsoever we use ordinary means of our preservation and help, yet ever we must cast our whole care on God, and put all our confidence in Him for help and safety; for without Him all other outward means are nothing but vain helps; for vain is the help of man (Psa. 60:11). And thus much for the fact itself.

Further, this fact is set out unto us by two circumstances, to wit, by the means which they used, and by the time which they observed for this exploit.

1. For the first, when they come to Jericho, this strong city, which they must needs subdue (or else they could not this way enter and possess the land), they do not go about to overturn the city by undermining, battering or scaling the walls; but according to God's appointment, they go one by one in order round about the city walls day by day for one week's space; and on the seventh day, they compass it seven times; during all which time they kept great silence, save only that seven priests sounded upon seven trumpets of ram's horns before the ark, till Joshua bade them shout. Now in common reason, a man would judge this rather to be some childish sport, than a means to fling down these great walls. Nay, consider it well, and it may seem a course tending rather to overthrow themselves, than the walls of Jericho; for they marched not in battle array, as though they would pitch a field against the people of Jericho, or lay siege to their city; but they went in length one before another, so as they might compass the city about. Now if the men of Jericho should have come forth, and made assault upon them, in all likelihood, the Israelites would have been overthrown, so weak and feeble were the means.

And yet the Lord, for weighty causes, prescribes this course to them; to wit:

(1) First, hereby to try the faith of His people, whether they will believe His promise or no, when they are enjoined to the weak and feeble means, and in man's reason, foolish.

(2) Secondly, to make manifest in the weakness an insufficiency of the means, His own all-sufficient power and wisdom, for the furtherance of His glory; for through weakness is God's power made perfect (2 Cor. 12:9). Hence, our Saviour Christ, when He was to cure the man that was born blind, tempers clay of spittle and lays it to his eyes (John 9:6). A means in common reason, rather fit to make a man blind, than to recover his sight; and yet Christ useth it for the furtherance of God's glory, in the manifestation of His divine power, whereby the people might know He was able in Himself to do whatsoever He would.

Now look what course the Lord here takes for the battering of the walls of Jericho, the like He useth in overthrowing the kingdom of the devil, the spiritual Jericho; especially in the New Testament. For after Christ's ascension, when He intended to destroy the kingdom of darkness under which all the nations sat, He sets apart a few fishermen, simple persons, wanting worldly wit and policy, neither did He put a sword of flesh into their hands, but the Word of God into their mouths; and thus sent them to dispossess the devil out of all the world, and to batter down the kingdom of darkness by their preaching. And now in these latter days, wherein the antichristian kingdom of the pope had spread itself through all places almost, God used the same weak means to overthrow it. For He set apart a silly monk, and endued him with gifts to preach the truth; by which means the kingdom of antichrist received a greater wound than if ten

princes had set themselves against it. And strange it is to see how God overturneth all the stratagems devised against His church, and how He vanquisheth the power of sin, by the weak means of the gospel preached, and by the prayers of the church; than which, to the world nothing seems more feeble or foolish.

The consideration hereof, is of special use; for it may be we shall see kings and people of great power and number, to make revolt from the gospel of Christ, and to fall to antichrist, embracing popery; whereas indeed, we must be grieved, but yet withal, here is good cause of comfort unto us; for we must know that Satan's kingdom must be battered down, not so much by the power of kings, as by the breath of God's mouth; not so much by the sword of flesh, as by the sword of the spirit. So it is said that the man of sin, even antichrist, must be abolished; not by the power of princes; yea, let all the princes and potentates of the world do their best for him; yet his kingdom must come down in God's good time; for God will consume him with the breath of His mouth, and abolish him with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8), that is, by the preaching of the Word in the mouths of His ministers, who are men void of all worldly power and policy.

Yet further, observe the means. They walk about the walls of Jericho seven days together. If men should attempt the like enterprise at this day, in all likelihood it would cost them their lives; for now there are devised such instruments of war, I mean great ordinance, and field pieces, that will kill afar off; and undoubtedly, if there had been such instruments of war in this city, the Israelites could not so safely have compassed the walls for so many days together. Whereby it appears more than probable that in those days there were no guns known; no not amongst the heathen, which at this day are so rife amongst Christians. Whence may be gathered that these later days are

perilous times; for now men's heads are set to devise more hurtful means against the life of man than ever the savage heathen knew. For besides the invention of guns, which put down all evidence of prowess and valour seen in ancient wars; our age exceeds in contriving such strange kinds of poisons as were never known in former times. For now men have devised poison of that sort that will kill a man not presently, but a week, or a month, or a quarter of a year after; as appears by the confession of those that have given themselves to study and practice such hurtful devices. And it is worth the marking that the principal inventors and practices of such hurtful inventions have been of the Romish religion.

2. The second circumstance to be observed is the time of this exploit. It was not on any of the six days, but on the seventh; and that after they had that day compassed the city about seven times; then when the priests blew the trumpets, and all the people shouted as Joshua bade them, the walls of Jericho fell down; for this was the time which God had appointed for this exploit. The reason why God appointed seven days, and seven times compassing on the seventh day, is not revealed unto us in the Word of God; and therefore we may not curiously pry into it, nor yet (as some do) hence gather that seven is a perfect number. But from the consideration of the very time wherein the walls fell down, we may learn this; that if we would have God to accomplish His promises unto us, we must wait for that time and season which He hath appointed; we must not think that God will accomplish them when we appoint. But we must believe God's promise, and also wait His good leisure, and then will it come to pass. The Israelites compassed about Jericho one day, and the walls never stirred; yet they do so six days together, and six times more on the seventh day, and yet they stand fast. The reason is because God's appointed time was not yet come. But on the seventh day, when they had compassed them about the seventh time, all the people gave up

the shout, and then they fell down; because that was the particular set time wherein God would accomplish His promise.

Further, whereas they compassed about the walls seven days together, it must needs be that they went about them on the Sabbath day, for that was one of the seven. Now here a doubt ariseth; for this was a servile work upon the Sabbath, contrary to God's commandment, which enjoineth so strict a rest upon the Sabbath day that they might not kindle a fire thereon; how then could they lawfully compass the city on the Sabbath day? Answer: All God's commandments in the moral law must be understood with this exception: Thou shalt do thus and thus, unless I the Lord command thee otherwise; for God is an absolute Lord, and so above the law; and therefore may lawfully command that which the law forbiddeth. In the second commandment He saith, Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image etc., and yet Moses, by God's special appointment, set up a brazen serpent, which was a figure of Christ. Upon such a special command, Abraham lawfully offered to kill Isaac; the Israelites at their departure spoiled and robbed the Egyptians; and Joshua with the people here compass the walls of Jericho on the Sabbath day.

“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.” Hebrews 11:31.

In this verse the Holy Ghost proceeds further in declaring the power of faith; and for this end, commends unto us the faith of Rahab. The words contain the sum and abridgement of the second and sixth chapters of Joshua; the meaning of them is plain.

The points herein to be considered are three:

I. The person believing, to wit, Rahab.

II. The reward of her faith given by Joshua: She perished not, but was preserved in the destruction of Jericho.

III. The testimony of her faith, so called by St James (Jam. 2:25) and set down in the end of this verse, When she had received the spies peaceably.

I. For the person, Rahab was a woman of Canaan dwelling in Jericho; as we may read in Joshua chapter 2. There she lived and had her abode; she was no Israelite, but a foreigner in regard of her birth, and a stranger from God’s church. How then comes it to pass that she is commended for her faith, and here put into the catalogue of these renowned believers? Why are not the rest of the Canaanites preferred to this honour as well as she? Answer: We must know this: that from the beginning of the world to the time of Christ’s ascension, the church of God was small; sometimes shut up in some few families, as from the flood to the giving of the law; and after, limited to a small kingdom and people in the land of Canaan, where the Lord’s people dwelt. During which time all other nations and

people of the world besides this little company, were no people of God, but strangers from the covenant of promise, and (as Paul saith) Without God in the world (Eph. 2:12). And howsoever God's church was thus shut up, as it were in a corner; yet now and then it pleased God to reach out His merciful hand to some of the heathen, calling them into His church, and receiving them into His Covenant; and they are called in the New Testament, proselytes. In Abraham's family, his bondmen and servants were circumcised, and made members of the church of God. And in Moses' days, Jethro, Moses father in law, a priest of Midian, obtained this at God's hands, to be joined unto God's church. And so was Ruth the Moabite (Ruth 1:16), and Naaman the Syrian (2 Kin. 5:17), and as some think Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:3), but this is not so certain. And so was the eunuch of Ethiopia, Candace queen of Ethiopia's chief governor (Acts 8:27). Now as God in mercy dealt with these, so did He in like mercy call Rahab the harlot above all the people of Jericho; for they trusted to their strong walls, and therefore died; but Rahab believed that the God of Israel was the true God, and so had mercy shewed unto her. Now after the time of Christ's ascension, God dealt more bountifully with the world; for he sent the light of His gospel unto all nations; and (as the Scripture saith) their sound went through all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world (Rom. 10:18).

The consideration of this limited estate of the church of God for so long a time, serves to discover unto us the error of those that maintain and hold universal calling of all and every man to the estate of grace and salvation; but if that were so, then in former ages the Gentiles would have believed; whereas we see that before the ascension of Christ, the church of God was but a small remnant, among the people of the Jews only; and not one of ten thousand believed among the Gentiles. Now if all men had been effectually called, then all would have received the promise of the gospel; but

many nations in former ages never heard of Christ; and therefore there was never in all ages a general effectual calling of all men.

Objection: Paul saith, God reconciled the world unto Himself by Christ (2 Cor. 5:19), and if that be so, then He called all men effectually. Answer: We must understand the apostle according to his meaning, for (Rom. 11:15) he expounds himself, and shews what he means by the world, saying that the falling away of the Jews is the reconciling of the world; which cannot be understood of men in all the ages, but in the last age of the world after Christ's ascension, wherein God offered to all the world life everlasting by Christ.

Further, Rahab is here noted by a notorious vice, she is called an harlot; whereby she was infamous among the men of Jericho. Certain of the Jews which are enemies to the New Testament say that the author of this epistle, and St James, do wrong unto Rahab for calling her an harlot; for (say they) in Joshua she is called but a taverner, or hostess. Answer: We must know that the word which is used in Joshua signifieth two things: a taverner and an harlot. Now take the word properly, and it is generally used in the Old Testament, and then most commonly it is put for an harlot. And therefore in the New Testament, Rahab hath no wrong done her by this title. For it is the thing that Joshua intended, to shew what a one she had been; and therefore in speaking of her to the spies, he bids them Go to that harlot's house (Josh. 6:22), using such an article as implies that she had been infamous and notorious in that kind. And yet we must not think that she played the harlot after she had received grace to believe, but long before; for faith purifieth the heart; neither will it suffer any sin to reign therein. She is called an harlot therefore in regard of her life past, for which she was infamous among the men of Jericho, before her calling to the faith.

Question: How could she believe, being an harlot in former times? For it is said that neither fornicators, nor adulterers, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 6:9). Answer: That is true according to the law; but the gospel gives this exception: unless they repent. And so are all legal threatenings to be understood in the Word of God.

In this circumstance of the person, and in the quality of her sin, we may note the endless mercy of God towards sinners; for He hath vouchsafed to call the most notorious and grievous sinners to the state of salvation; as Isaiah saith, The Lord is very ready to forgive (Isa. 55:7), yea, with the Lord is plenteous redemption (Psa. 130:7). This appears by vouchsafing mercy to Rahab a notable harlot; and as He dealeth with Rahab here, so hath He shewed like mercy to other notorious sinners. King Manasseh had sold himself to idolatry and witchcraft, and had shed innocent blood exceeding much, and caused Judah to sin (2 Kin. 21:6-16), for which he was led captive; yet when he humbled himself and prayed, God was entreated of him (2 Chr. 33:11-13). And Paul saith of himself, when I was a blasphemer and a persecutor, and an oppressor, I was received to mercy, though I were the chief of all sinners; that Christ might first shew in me all longsuffering, unto the example of them which shall in time come to believe in Him unto everlasting life (1 Tim. 1:13-16).

The consideration of this exceeding mercy of God toward sinners is of great use:

1. First, it armeth a poor soul against despair, whereinto the devil would draw it upon the view of the multitude and greatness of his sins; for many reason thus: My sins are so heinous, so many, and so vile, that I dare not come to God, neither can I be persuaded of the pardon of them. But behold here the endless mercy of God, in forgiving sins to them that repent though they be like crimson and

scarlet, and never so many. This must comfort the wounded soul; and encourage all touched hearts to repent, and to sue to the Lord for mercy and pardon.

2. Secondly, it must move every one of us now to begin to repent, if we have not repeated heretofore; and if we have begun, to do it more earnestly; for God is most merciful, and with Him is plenteous redemption. Yet we must beware that we take not occasion hereby to live in sin, because God is merciful; for this is to turn the grace of God into wantonness (Jude 4); which St Jude makes a brand of the ungodly, and a sign of the reprobate, who (as the apostle there saith) are appointed to condemnation; yea, that is a despising of the bountifulness of God which should lead them to repentance; and hereby they heap up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath (Rom. 2:4,5). Let us therefore remember this counsel of Paul: Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid (Rom. 6:1,2). We must all, but especially young men, take heed of this course; for if we bless ourselves in our heart, and say we shall have peace though we live in sin, God will not be merciful unto us, but His wrath shall smoke against us.

Furthermore, that howsoever Rahab was a sinner, and a most infamous harlot; yet when she repents, God doth honour and grace her with the title of a believer; and that among those most renowned believers that ever lived before Christ; even to be one of that cloud of witnesses in whom faith is commended to the church for ever. Hence also it is that St Matthew reckons her in the genealogy of Christ to be one of His predecessors; whenas Amaziah, Ahaz and such like, who (for ought we know) did never repent, are not once named. Herein we may see God's wonderful mercy in honouring sinners, if they do repent. The consideration whereof must move us, not only to learn the doctrine of repentance, and to have it in our mouths, but to

labour that it may be settled in our hearts; that we may shew forth the power thereof in our lives. All of us desire honour and reputation among men. Well, if we would be honoured indeed, we must repent, and then God Himself will honour us; neither have our sins made us so infamous, as by our repentance God shall make us honourable.

Further, concerning the party; How could Rahab come by faith, seeing she lived out of the church, where the Word was never preached unto her? Answer: If we read the story, we shall find that she came to believe by a report of God's marvellous acts; for when the Lord delivered the Israelites out of Egypt through the Red Sea, and drowned Pharaoh therein with all his host; and as they went further, He delivered the kings of the nations into their hands, as Og king of Bashan, with the kings of the Amorites and Amalekites. Now, the report hereof came to the people of Jericho; whereupon they were stricken with a wonderful great fear. And howsoever the men of Jericho made no other use of it, but to sin and prepare themselves to resist and bear back the Israelites, yet this report wrought further with Rahab; and therefore she came to the spies, whom she had received, and hid upon the roof of her house, and there confessed the God of Israel to be the true God in heaven above and in the earth beneath.

Here we may note that when ordinary means fail for the beginning and increase of faith, as the Word preached and the sacraments, then God can work faith extraordinarily, even by reports and rumours. And thus Rahab, and many of the heathen, came to believe. We say of the church of Rome, that it is no true church, and that their religion cannot save a man. Hereupon many that favour that way, reply and say: Will you therefore condemn all your forefathers that lived and died in time of popery? We answer, no; we dare not give such censure upon them; but rather judge charitably of them; yea, we

have great hope that many of them were saved. For though they wanted preaching and reading, yet God might work faith in them extraordinarily, and bless even good reports and speeches unto them, with the reading of other godly books besides God's Word, which some of them had. We need not then give so hard a censure of them; because God is not tied to ordinary means, but can save extraordinarily when means fail.

Further concerning Rahab's faith, it may be demanded whether it was weak or strong, because before she had done this act of faith, her whole abode was among the heathen. Answer: We must know that there is in the child of God a certain seed, or beginning, or preparation to a true and lively faith; which our Saviour Christ in the Scriptures doth honour with the title of a true and lively faith; as when a man know no more but this: that Christ Jesus is the true Messiah; having withal a care and conscience to profit and increase in the true knowledge of the gospel, and to join practice therewith, in his life and calling. Examples hereof, we have many in God's Word: A certain ruler came to Christ, and he sought Him to go down and heal his son (John 4:49ff.). Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, thy son liveth; and the ruler believed the word that Jesus spake unto him and his son lived. Now, enquiring of the hour, and finding it to be the same when Jesus said, Thy son liveth, the text saith, He believed and all his household. Now what was this man's faith? Surely, he only acknowledged that Christ was the true Messiah; and withal, resigned himself and his family to be instructed further therein. And though they knew nothing particularly of the means whereby Christ should be a Saviour; yet for this willingness to embrace Christ, and readiness to be taught, the Holy Ghost saith, they did believe. So in the same chapter (v.29), the woman of Samaria (being convicted in her conscience of the things that Christ told her) runs to the town and saith, Come see a man that told me all things ever I did. Is not

He the Christ? Then the text saith (v.39), Many of the Samaritans believed, because of the saying of the woman. Now what faith had these Samaritans? Surely, they did only acknowledge Him to be the true Messiah, and were willing to be further instructed in His doctrine; which they testified by going to hear Him in their own persons. So likewise, Christ gives a notable testimony to the confession of the apostolic faith (Matt. 16:17,18) in the person of Peter, saying, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock (that is, upon this your faith, which thou confessest) will I build my church; and yet the apostles were ignorant of some main points of the gospel, for a little after, when Christ tells them of His going to Jerusalem and of His passion for the redemption of them, Peter persuades Him to the contrary, saying, Master, spare thyself, these things shall not be unto thee (v.22). Whereby, it appears that Peter did not know how Christ should be a Saviour; neither did the apostles particularly know about Christ's resurrection, till He was risen again; yea, at the very time of His ascension, they knew not the nature of Christ's kingdom; and therefore they asked Him: Lord, wilt thou now restore the kingdom of Israel? (Acts 1:6), dreaming still of a temporal kingdom; for which Christ rebukes them. And notwithstanding all these wants, Christ saith, they had true faith; yea, such faith as the gates of hell should never prevail against. This then is a most comfortable truth, that a man (in the want of means of further knowledge) do hold Christ Jesus to be the true Messiah, and yield himself willingly to learn the doctrine of the gospel, and (withal) join obedience to his knowledge, the Lord is willing for a time, to accept of this as of true faith.

Now to apply this to Rahab's faith; her faith was but a weak faith, or rather the seed and beginning of a lively faith afterward. For as we may read, all that she knew was this: that the God of Israel was the only true God, and that He would certainly deliver the land of Canaan into the Israelites' hands. This was a notable persuasion

wrought by a report; and accordingly she joins herself to God's people, and resigns herself to obey the God of Israel; but whether she knew the particular doctrine of salvation by Christ, it is not here set down, and it is very likely that as yet she was altogether ignorant of it. For here are all things set down that tend to her commendation. So that her faith was very weak, and only the seed of a lively faith; and yet here the Holy Ghost doth commend her for her faith amongst the most renowned believers that ever were.

Hence we may learn many good instructions:

1. First, that God makes much account of a little grace; if He sees in a man but the seeds of grace; He doth highly esteem thereof. When the young man came to Christ (Mark 10:17-22), and asked Him what he should do to be saved; Christ tells him he must keep the commandments; the young man answers that he had kept them from his youth; at which answer it is said, Christ looked upon him and loved him. Thus he did for the shew of grace which appeared in his answer; much more then will He like of that which is true grace indeed. So likewise Christ reasoning with the scribe concerning the first and great commandment, and perceiving that he had answered discretely, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God (Mark 12:34), shewing hereby how deeply He tenders the sparks and seeds of true grace; nay, He makes much of a very shew of grace; which if it be so, then if God have given to any of us but one spark of true grace, how ought we to tender it, and cherish it, and to rejoice therein with all thankfulness to God for it? Yea, we must seek to increase the same, for according to our grace is our acceptance and respect with God in Christ.

2. Secondly, whereas Rahab's weak faith is thus commended, here is comfort for all those that are willing to learn God's Word, and to

obey the same. Many are willing to learn, but they are so wonderfully troubled with dullness and want of memory, that they cannot learn; and hereupon they grow to doubt much of their estate towards God. But these men must comfort themselves; for though they have but little knowledge, yet if they have care to increase in knowledge, and make conscience of obedience to so much as they know, God will account of them as of true believers; and in truth such are to be commended above those which have much knowledge, and so seem to have much faith, and yet shew forth no obedience answerable to their knowledge; for they have a shew of godliness, but want the power of it.

3. Thirdly, this confuteth our ignorant boasters, who say they have as much knowledge as any man needs to have; for they know that a man must love God above all; and that Christ Jesus is the Saviour of the world; and this (say they) is enough; and hereupon they take up their rest for matters of religion, and seek to go no further. But these men know nothing at all; for if they would add to this which they know, though it be but little, a care to increase in knowledge, and with their knowledge join obedience, then it were something. But while they have no care either to get more knowledge or to shew forth obedience to that they know, they do hereby shew plainly that there is no drop of saving knowledge, nor true faith in their hearts.

4. Fourthly, seeing God commends the seeds of true faith, for true faith indeed; this must encourage all men to use all good means to come by true faith and repentance. For though as yet thou hast but little knowledge, and therefore but little faith and repentance; yet if thou join hereto an endeavour to get more knowledge, and have also a care to practice that which thou knowest; then will the Lord increase thy knowledge and thy small faith; till thou have sufficient, and in the mean time accept of thee as a true believer.

And thus much for the measure of Rahab's faith.

II. The second point to be considered is the reward which Rahab received at the hands of Joshua and the Israelites for her faith: She perished not with them that obeyed not; that is, she with her family was preserved alive, whenas Joshua destroyed all that lived in Jericho, young and old, man, woman and child.

But some will say, the Israelites were the people of God, a religious people; now it may seem to be a cruel part to destroy all; for what had the young infants done? Answer: In man's reason it may seem so indeed; yet it could not be a cruel part, because they did no more than that which God commanded them. For it was God's ordinance that the Canaanites should be rooted out, and that the Israelites should shew no compassion on them (Deut. 7:2). Besides, even in reason the Israelites had some cause to deal thus; for God gave this charge to the Israelites, that when they came to any city or people: first, they must offer peace, and if they answered peaceably, then they must be saved, and become their tributaries and servants (Deut. 20:10,11), but if they would not make peace, then they must put them to the edge of the sword (v.17), man, woman and child, being inhabitants of Canaan, or near adjoining. And thus no doubt Joshua dealt when he came to Jericho. First, he offered peace if they would become their tributaries; but they trusted to their strong walls, and would not yield to become their servants; for which cause he put them all to the edge of the sword; and therefore it was no cruelty, because it was God's commandment; for God's will is the rule of justice.

But was not this partial dealing, to spare Rahab with her family, who were inhabitants of Jericho as well as the rest? Answer: There were two causes why she should escape: First, because she yielded herself

unto them, and was content to become one of their religion; and therefore the commandment of putting all to death, did not take hold of her. Secondly, Rahab obtained this of the spies, and bound them to it by an oath, that when they came to destroy Jericho, they should spare her and her family; and therefore also did she escape.

In this preservation of Rahab, we may learn sundry points:

1. First, whereas she is saved alive, because of the oath of the spies, we see what special care everyone ought to have for the doing of those lawful things whatsoever they are, whereto he binds himself by an oath. Joshua, knowing this bond of the spies to Rahab (as we may read), gives special charge for her preservation. Hence, David saith, if a man bind himself with an oath, he must keep it, though it be to his own hindrance (Psa. 15:4). Every single promise binds a man's conscience, if it be lawful; but when an oath is adjoined, then there is a double bond. And therefore the author to the Hebrews saith, God, to make known the stableness of His counsel promised, bound Himself with an oath; that by two immutable things (to wit, God's promise and oath), we might have strong consolation (Heb. 6:18); so that an oath binds a man double to the performing of his promise. And that this conscience is to be made of a lawful oath, appeareth thus: If man make a lawful oath, and yet be induced to do it by fraud; he must perform it, and not fail; as appeareth by Joshua's act to the Gibeonites (Josh. 9:19). For when they came to the Jews craftily, as though they had been men of a far country, and had brought them to swear that they would not hurt them; though the host of Israel murmured at it, when they came to their cities; and though they might have reasoned thus: that they got it of them by fraud, and therefore they would not keep it; yet, this is the answer of Joshua and the princes unto the people; that they had sworn unto them, by the Lord God of Israel, and therefore they might not touch

them. And when king Saul, in zeal to Israel, had broken this oath of Joshua and the princes, by destroying the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21), there came a plague upon the land for three year's space; and was not stayed till seven of Saul's sons were hanged for Saul's act. So that the breach of an oath is a most dangerous thing; and therefore, he that hath bound himself thereby, must have great care to keep it.

Yet here some cases may be propounded, worthy of our consideration:

(1) For first, what if a man have taken an oath to do an unlawful thing, must he then keep the oath? Answer: If his conscience tell him out of God's Word that the thing is not lawful, then he must not keep it; for an oath may not be the bond of iniquity; the keeping of it is a doubling of the sin. David, in his anger, had sworn to slay Nabal, and all the men of his family, for denying relief unto his servants (1 Sam. 25:22). This was a rash oath; and therefore afterward, when he was prevented by Abigail's good counsel, he blesseth God for it, and breaks his oath which he had made (v.33).

(2) Question 2. What if a man take an oath, and yet afterward in conscience doubts of the lawfulness of that which he had sworn to do; what must be done in this case? Answer: So long as he doubteth, he must defer the performance of it. For he that doth a thing doubtingly, condemneth himself in the thing that he doth, because he doth it not of faith, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

(3) Question 3. What if a man be urged by fear to take an oath, must he afterward keep it? As for example, a man is taken of thieves; now wanting money, they charge him on pain of death to fetch them money, and they bind him hereto by an oath; what must be done in this case, considering there must such great care be had in keeping of

an oath? Answer: So long as the thing which he is bound by oath to do, respecteth his private damage only, he must keep his oath; yet so as he declare his case to the magistrate, because their course is against the common good; now the magistrate hearing of it, is according to equity, to provide for his defence, and for the safety of his goods.

2. A second point to be considered in Rahab's preservation is this: Rahab escaped a common danger (but not without all means) only staying herself on the bare promise of the spies; but as she believed in the true God, so she used means whereby she might be sure of her preservation; and that is this: she binds the spies by an oath to save her life, and to spare her household; also she keeps within, and ties the cord of red thread in her window, according to the mutual covenant. Thus she useth means for her temporal safety; and so have others of God's children done in like case. When king Hezekiah (2 Kin. 20:6) was sick, he was certified by the prophet from God that he should live fifteen years longer; yet he neglected not the means whereby he should be healed and live; for he applied dried figs to his boil, and used food and raiment for his bodily life, during the whole space of those fifteen years. So the apostle St Paul, in his voyage by sea to Rome, was assured by a vision that none of them that were with him should perish, but all come safe to land; and yet notwithstanding, when as the mariners would have gone out, he tells the centurion that unless those stayed in the ship (that so they might use ordinary means) they could not be safe (Acts 27:31).

Now as it fareth temporally for the saving of the body; so it is in the spiritual case, for the salvation of the soul; men must use means to come by grace, and so to salvation. But many in this regard are great enemies to their own souls; for they say, God is merciful, and Christ is a Saviour, and I hope He will save me; yet they will not use the

means to come to salvation. But if we would be saved, then with our inward faith, we must join the observation of the outward ordinary means whereby God useth to save men's souls; as namely, the hearing of God's Word, calling upon God by prayer, and the receiving of the sacraments; that thereby our sinful lives might be amended, and our faith strengthened. This must be remembered of us; for they that condemn or neglect the means, despise the grace and mercy of God offered therein; and therefore Paul saith of the Jews, when they put the gospel from them, that they did judge themselves unworthy of eternal life (Acts 13:46).

It followeth,

With them that disobeyed.

That is, with the people of Jericho. Question: How did they disobey? Answer: Thus: When Joshua and the people came unto them and offered them peace, if so be they would become their tributaries and servants, the inhabitants of Jericho would not yield unto them, but set themselves against the people of Israel, and so against God, in that they would not undertake that estate which God offered unto them; and therefore they are here esteemed disobedient.

Hence we learn that if it shall please God at any time to put us out of these temporary benefits which we enjoy in goods and possessions; we must be contented with God's will and providence, and seek to obey God therein. The inhabitants of Jericho pay dearly for their disobedience in this case; God sets the Israelites as lords over them; and because they will not yield and become their servants, they die for it. David's practice was commendable in this case; for when he was put out of his own kingdom, by his own son, he murmured not, but said thus: If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again; but if he say thus, I have no delight in thee; behold,

here I am, let Him do to me as seemeth good in His eyes (2 Sam. 15:25,26). In other countries we see cities and towns spoiled and sacked; what must the people do? Answer: They must submit themselves to the Lord's pleasure; knowing that He permitteth it, who may do what He will. And so, if it shall please God to bring us into the like case; as to suffer our enemies to have dominion over us, and to dispossess us of our places; we must submit ourselves to God's good pleasure, when we see no help by lawful means; we must not murmur or rebel; for that is but to disobey, as the people of Jericho did; and so shall we be destroyed as they were. And thus much for the second point.

III. The third thing to be considered in this example is the testimony of her faith in receiving the spies peaceably. This was a notable work of faith, as St James noteth (Jam. 2:25), and the more commendable because she received them into her house and entertained them; yea, she preserved them in danger of her own life; for she did it contrary to the pleasure of the state under which she lived. But against this may be objected:

(1) First, that she lied in this fact; for when the king of Jericho's messengers came to search for the spies whom she had hid in the top of her house, she said to the messengers that they were gone another way. Now, how can it be a good work which was done with lying; especially to our superior who hath power to ask us, and to whom we are double bound to speak the truth? Answer: We must know that the work was good which she did; and a work of mercy to preserve God's people, although she failed in the manner of doing it; she received them by faith, though she shewed distrust in lying for their safety. It was a notable work of Rebecca (Gen. 27:10), to cause her son Jacob to get his father's blessing, for so God had determined, and yet she failed in the manner.

(2) Question: But how could this work be good, being faulty in the manner of doing it? Answer: It might; for Rebecca's person stood righteous before God in Christ. Now the worker being acceptable unto God, the work must needs be good also; and though the worker failed in the circumstances, yet the evil of the work was covered in the obedience of Christ; and so the goodness of it was approved, and the fault thereof covered.

The use of this doctrine is twofold: First, it shews that the works of God's children are partly good and partly bad; even the best works they do are imperfect. Secondly, this shews the true meaning of St James, when he saith that Rahab was justified by her works; hereby he means that by her works she declared herself to be just. For that she was not justified by her works appeareth plain; because the work which she did was faulty in the manner, and not perfectly good; and therefore could not be answerable to the perfect justice of God.

(3) But some will say further, that this concealing of the spies and lying to the king's messengers, was a work of treachery against her own country; and therefore was a notorious fault, and so no work of faith. Answer: Treachery indeed is a great villany, as one man can practice against another; and therefore ought to be abhorred and detested of all men; but yet we must know that Rahab in this place is no traitor. For she had a plain certificate in her conscience that the land of Canaan and the city Jericho were given by the Lord to the people of Israel, and that they were the right lords thereof, and should enjoy them; so that she hid the spies not in treachery but in faith.

Thus we see her act. The duties which we learn hence are these:

(1) First, it is said that this harlot Rahab, being by calling an hostess and a victualler, received the spies peaceably. Hence innkeepers are

taught their duty. First, if they will shew themselves faithful, they must have special regard and respect unto such guests of theirs as be the servants of God, and fear Him. This was the work of Rahab's faith towards the spies of God's people. David makes this the property of every godly man, that in his eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord (Psa. 15:4). And therefore if innkeepers will shew themselves godly, they must so do. And to encourage each one hereto, our Saviour Christ maketh this notable promise (Matt. 10:41,42), He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a just man, shall receive a just man's reward. And if any shall give to one of these little ones to drink, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

(2) Also, strangers are here taught that in seeking places for their abode, they must make choice to be with those that fear the Lord; so God directs them. And when Christ sent His disciples to preach, He bade them (Matt. 10:11), when they entered into a city, to enquire who is worthy in that city, and there to abide till they departed. But alas, these duties are little performed; especially the first. For innkeepers and such as entertain strangers do make most of those that give themselves to riot and good fellowship; they are best welcome that spend most in gaming, drinking and lasciviousness. These might learn otherwise of Rahab.

(3) Thirdly, innkeepers must here learn that when a man comes into their house (if he be no malefactor) they must give him protection. Thus Rahab doth here to the spies of the Israelites, even with the danger of her own life. The like also we may read of Lot; for when two angels in the likeness of men came into his house, and the men of Sodom would have had them out; Lot besought them to let them

alone (Gen. 19:8), and his reason was because they came under the shadow of his roof.

(4) Again, hence we may learn another general duty; to wit that a Christian man in the time of persecution and danger, is not to discover his fellow brethren, or to detect them; but must rather endanger his own life by concealing them for their preservation. This was practiced by good Obadiah; when Jezabel killed the Lord's prophets, he hid them by fifties in a cave; which if it had been known, would have cost him his life. And so did the apostles and brethren in the primitive church; when the Jews would have slain Paul in Damascus, the brethren took him by night, and let him down through the wall in a basket to save his life (Acts 9:25). And since those times, in the history of the church under the gospel, we may find that when the Christians were urged by persecutors to reveal their brethren, they rather chose to lay down their own lives than to betray their brethren into their enemies hands. And this is true love indeed, such as the Holy Ghost commendeth, when a man will give his life for his brother (1 John 3:16).

(5) Lastly, whereas Rahab received the spies peaceably, we note that it is a special fruit of faith to be peaceable and kind. The Holy Ghost, repeating the fruits of the Spirit, names peace and meekness amongst them. Now this peace is when a man is kind and peaceable to all, but especially those that be of the household of faith. And undoubtedly, it is a fruit of faith, which the prophet Isaiah foretold should be under the gospel (Isa. 11:6), that then the wolf should dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie with the kid; signifying that howsoever men by nature were as savage as wolves, yet being converted to the kingdom of Christ, they should become gentle as lambs, being kind and peaceable one to another. This peaceableness is especially to be shewed in the place and calling where a man lives;

for there did Rahab shew forth hers, when the spies came unto her. And where this is truly in outward action, there is faith in the heart; it is a good token that a man is at peace with God, when he lives peaceably with men. Which being so, we must learn not to give place to our heady affections, but must rather bridle rage of malice and anger, and endeavour to live peaceably with all, especially with those that be members of God's church. And thus much of this example.

“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.” Hebrews 11:32.

Hitherto, the author of this epistle hath set down unto us examples of faith, more at large. But from this verse to the end of this chapter, he heaps up briefly together many examples of faith, one upon another. The reason whereof is: First, because the number of true believers which are mentioned in Scripture is very great, and therefore he could not here stand to set them all down in order one by one. Secondly, by handling all the examples at large which the author propoundeth in this short epistle, he should have seemed to have restrained the name and title of faith to a very few; for all that are here named are commended for their faith, are but few, in comparison of all that truly believed in the Old Testament. And therefore he heaps up the rest together, to intimate that the number of believers was more than he could record. And this he doth by a rhetorical preterition, or passing over, called in schools paralepsis; whereby matters are briefly despatched and passed over, with the very naming only.

What shall I say more?

That is, as if he had said: I have propounded divers worthy examples of faith; and besides these, there are also many more; but the time of writing an epistle will not suffer me to handle them all at large.

First, in this quick despatch of believers by our apostle, we may observe a difference between the infinite understanding of God, and the created understanding that is in man's mind. Man indeed

understands the things that are revealed to him of God; but yet in a manner and order far different from that which is in God; for man cannot conceive in his mind all the things he knows, at once, by one act of his understanding; but must have distinct time to conceive of them, one by one distinctly. For look as he utters them distinctly, one by one (as we see in this place), so likewise doth he apprehend them in his mind and understanding. But with God it is not so; for God at once, by one act of understanding, without distinction of time, doth conceive of all things at once, both past, present and to come; and so could utter and express them, if any creature were able in their mind so to comprehend them.

Secondly, whereas the Holy Ghost saith, The time would be too short etc., He gives us to understand that the number of believers is very great, and that a long time would not serve to repeat them, or to write of them. This directeth us unto a good answer to a question, which much troubleth our common people; to wit, How great is the number of them that shall be saved; whether it is greater than the number of them that shall be damned? Answer: We must consider the number of the elect two ways: first, in comparison of them that shall be condemned; secondly, in themselves. If we compare the elect with the reprobate, the number of the elect is but a small number; for in most ages, the church of God hath been but an handful, compared to the rest of the world. And in the church, this likewise is true: Many are called, but few chosen (Matt. 22:14), in respect of them that are called. But yet consider the elect as they are in themselves, and they are a huge great number; yea, innumerable, as St John saith speaking of the elect among the Gentiles, besides the chosen Jews; for all that do truly believe, shall be saved. Now, believers are innumerable. This the author of the epistle would insinuate unto us by his phrase of speech, What shall I say more, etc.

In handling these examples, we must observe the order here used by the Holy Ghost; for in this 32nd verse he sets down the names of the persons that believe, all jointly together, rehearsing them one by one; and in the 33rd to 35th verses, he lays down briefly the fruits of all their faith; in number ten most notable actions, serving all and every one of them, most worthily to commend their faith. In handling of them, we will follow the order observed by the Holy Ghost; and first speak of the persons, then of their actions.

I. The four first are these: Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah. These four were judges in Israel. The fifth is David, who was both a prophet and a king. The sixth is Samuel, both a judge and a prophet. Lastly, the prophets generally; by whom we must understand especially these three, Elijah, Elisha and Daniel.

In speaking of these persons here commended unto us; first, we will entreat of them generally, and then in particular.

1. In general:

(1) Let us first observe the order which the Holy Ghost here useth in naming them. Gideon, for time, was after Barak; and yet he is first named; so Samson was after Jephthah, and yet here he is put before them. This the Holy Ghost would never do without some special cause. We therefore must know that the Scripture useth a twofold order in reckoning up of persons; to wit, the order of time, when as he that lived first is first named; and the order of dignity, when the most worthy and excellent is named first, though he were later in time. Now the Scripture accounteth best of them those that did excel in faith, and in the fruits thereof; so in this place whereas Gideon is set before Barak, and Samson before Jephthah; the Holy Ghost observes not the order of time, but the order of dignity, according to

the excellency of their faith; naming them in the first place, those that were most famous for this grace of faith, and did exceed the other in the fruits thereof.

Here we learn this special point: that the more men excel in faith, and other graces of God, the more God will honour them; for look who most honour God, shall be most honoured of Him; but the more a man excels in grace, the more he honours God. And for this cause is Gideon preferred before Barak, and Samson before Jephthah; because they were more plentiful in the fruits of faith. This must move us, not only to seek to have faith, but to labour every day, more and more for the increase of faith, and of obedience; for the more a man abounds in grace before God, the more will God honour him, both here and in heaven. And thus much for the order wherein they are propounded.

(2) Secondly, let us consider what manner of persons these were, Gideon, Barak and the rest. They were extraordinary men, in their time, raised up by God, for the special good of His church, and the commonwealth of the Jews, that they might help and defend them in distress. And therefore, as their calling was extraordinary, so God endued them with extraordinary gifts of wisdom, strength, zeal and authority; for which they are here renowned in this catalogue of most worthy believers.

In their example, we may observe this point: That those whom God doth raise up extraordinarily, for some special good in His church, them He endues with extraordinary gifts to discharge that calling; and withal, He gives them the spirit of grace, with a true and lively faith. This (besides the instance we have in hand) appears plainly in Christ's apostles; they were called by Christ to preach the gospel to all the world, and to plant the church universally; and thereupon

(howsoever they were simple men before) were furnished with extraordinary gifts of wisdom, zeal and knowledge, and with this excellent grace of saving faith, which did sanctify their other gifts; for howsoever Judas was numbered among them, having been a disciple; yet he never came to the execution of the apostleship, but went astray from that administration (Acts 1:25). And in these latter days, when God restored His gospel to light, out of the dark mist of popery; He raised up extraordinary men whom he endued with wisdom, zeal and judgment; which gifts also He sealed up in them by a lively faith, which they testified by their piety and godliness in life and conversation. And this course He observeth usually, in all those whom He raiseth up extraordinarily for the good of His church.

This we must observe, to acquaint us with a special difference between those whom God raised up extraordinarily for special good, and all arch-heretics and traitors that set up themselves, unsent of God. For many such wretches have excelled in wisdom, in worldly policy, in zeal and authority; whereupon they have pretended and persuaded many that they were called of God. But hereby especially they are to be discovered that they are void of this rare gift of true saving faith; for look at their lives, and ordinarily for impiety they have been and are arch-devils. So that though they wanted not authority, or outward zeal and wisdom; yet they wanted faith, which should purify their hearts; or else they would never have lived in such notorious sins as they were discovered to do. And this is the trial which our Saviour Christ directs us unto, saying, Ye shall know them by their fruits (Matt. 7:16). Let them therefore pretend what knowledge, what zeal, or authority whatsoever they will; if the fruits of faith appear not in their lives by obedience, they are not called of God for the special good of His church.

2. Thus much of these men in general. Now we come to entreat of them severally, as they are propounded in the text.

(1) The first person commended here unto us is Gideon; the history of whose acts is laid down at large in Judges chapter 6. In his example note one point especially, to acquaint us with the manner God useth in begetting and increasing true faith in the hearts of His children. If we read the story, we shall see that the Lord in the likeness of an angel called Gideon once, twice, yea, thrice to be a judge to His people. But Gideon greatly doubts of his calling; and therefore desires a sign of the Lord, which God gave him, for the sacrifice which he offered was burned up with fire from heaven. Yet still he doubted, and was in a greater fear than before, even of death itself; but being confirmed by the angel, and set a work, he brake down the altar of Baal, and built one to the true God, and thereon offered sacrifice as God commanded, though with some fear. And when the Midianites and Amalekites came armed against Israel, he is stirred up by the Spirit of God for their defence; but yet still he doubted of his calling, and therefore again asked a sign at God's hands, and had it; and after that asked another, which God also granted. Now having all these one in the neck of another, at length he knows his calling, and so goes in faith, and defends Israel; so that he got the assurance of his calling by sundry particular signs and confirmations of his faith. And although he doubted greatly at the first; yet after he believeth, not only that he should be a judge and deliverer of God's people out of the hands of their enemies; but this principally, that God was his God, and would give him everlasting life.

Here then we have a notable precedent of the manner of God's working true and sound faith in the hearts of His children. They receive not this grace at once, but by degrees; God worketh it in them

by little and little. When a man is first called of God, he hath much doubting and fear; but then God sends sundry helps to weaken this fear and doubting; and as they decrease, so is faith increased. No man believes soundly at the first, but weakly; even as he grows in years, so he must grow in faith; and the increase of our faith is by continuance in the means, and by the experience of God's love and favour. And indeed the more faith increaseth, the more we use the means to grow therein, and the more we delight in the means; and at length, after long experience of God's mercy, we shall have wrought in our hearts this gift of true and lively faith, which shall be able to prevail against all fear and doubting. And thus much for the person of Gideon.

(2) The second person commended unto us is Barak, of whom we may read in Judges chapter 4. His story is large and plain enough; and therefore we will not stand upon it.

(3) The third person is Samson, of whom we may also read in Judges chapters 13 to 16. Now touching Samson, this question may well be asked: How can he be justly commended for his faith, seeing it may seem he killed himself? Answer: Samson did not kill himself, for he was called extraordinarily to be a judge over Israel, for their defence and delivery out of the hands of the Philistines. Now when the princes of the Philistines were gathered together, being his enemies, and the enemies of God and His people, he cast the house down upon their heads to kill them therein, because (being blind) he could not pursue them in battle. And therefore having them by God's providence in his hands, he destroyed them as his calling was; albeit, he lost his life in the same action.

Again, Samson in pulling down the house purposed not directly and wilfully to kill himself, but to adventure his own life by taking just

revenge upon his enemies, and the enemies of God; and therefore as God's servant, he prayed first unto God; and so did no more than the soldier in the field ought to do; who bearing a loving mind towards his country, is content to adventure his own life for the destruction of his enemies, in the defence of his country; and is resolved that if he die in that defence, he dieth in his lawful place and calling, and dieth God's servant, yea, God's champion. This did Samson, and therefore may justly be commended for his faith. Neither is this fact of any disgrace, but rather a notable commendation of his faith, and an evidence of great zeal for God's glory, and of singular love to his people.

(4) The fourth person commended here is Jephthah, of whom we may read in Judges chapter 11. Jephthah was the base son of Gideon, born of an harlot. To be base born is noted in Scripture as a matter of reproach; and therefore the Lord forbad a bastard from entering in to the congregation of the Lord to bear any office to the tenth generation (Deut. 23:2). So ignominious is this kind of birth, by the judgment of God's Spirit, unto that party on whom it falls. For this sin of fornication doth not only hurt the persons committing it, but even frames the children base born, unto the tenth generation. Yet howsoever Jephthah was base born, and so suffered for it great reproach; afterwards, he is commended unto us for his faith, among the most worthy believers that ever were. Indeed, besides Jephthah, we shall not find the like example in Scripture. Yet in Jephthah we may see that howsoever it be a reproachful thing to be born of fornication, yet that doth not hinder, but that the party so born may come to true faith, and so to the favour of God, and to life everlasting. Such persons as are base born, upon view of that reproach which the Scripture fasteneth upon them, might take occasion to think miserably of themselves; even that God hath rejected them; but this example serves to shew that it hindereth not,

but that they may come into the favour if God, and by faith get honour of God, to counterveil that discredit which they have by their base birth.

Further, whereas we commonly say that such as are base born are wicked persons; here we see the contrary in Jephthah; and therefore we must not for this cause condemn any for wicked or ungodly. Indeed, the Lord hath branded this estate with reproach, that men should shun the sin of fornication the more.

Again, whereas Jephthah is here commended for his faith; we may probably gather that their opinion is not true who hold that Jephthah sacrificed and killed his own daughter. For being commended here for his faith, certain it is that he had knowledge in God's will and Word; and therefore we must not think but that he knew God and would never accept of such a vow by the performance whereof he should commit wilful and most unnatural murder. This his faith shews that it was not his intent to kill the first person that met him out of his house, for by the light of nature he might know that God would never accept thereof; and therefore it is not likely that he so made his vow; for this faith and such a vow cannot stand together.

But some will say that the text is plain (Jud. 11:31), that he vowed to offer for a burnt offering, the thing that came out of the doors of his house to meet him when he came home. Answer: It is so indeed in some translations: It shall be the Lord's and I will offer it etc. And this latter translation is more suitable to the circumstances of the place, for this was Jephthah's meaning, that whatsoever met him first, he would dedicate it to God; and if it were a thing that might be sacrificed, then his purpose was to offer it unto the Lord in sacrifice.

Question: But if he did not kill her, why did he then so lament for her? Answer: Because, by his vow, he was to dedicate her unto God;

and so she was to live a Nazarite all her life long; which must needs be a very bitter thing to him who had no child but her; it being so great a reproach, and in some sort a curse in those days, to want issue. I speak not here how ill or well Jephthah did in making her a Nazarite; but this may no way be admitted, that believing godly Jephthah should advisedly kill his own daughter. Undoubtedly he could not think that God would be pleased with such an abominable sacrifice.

Thus much for these persons; the rest I pass over, because this story is plain and large in Scripture.

“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.” Hebrews 11:33-35.

II. In these words, the apostle propounds unto us ten several fruits of faith; the nine first whereof are the particular actions of the parties spoken of in the former verse; and they are here related for the commendation of their faith.

1. The first is subduing of kingdoms; which serves chiefly for the commendation of the four judges there named and of David. For as we may read in the books of Judges and of Samuel, all these subdued kingdoms; as the Canaanites (Jud. 4), the Midianites (Jud. 6), the Philistines (Jud. 15,16; 2 Sam. 8:1), the Ammonites (Jud. 11), the Moabites and Aramites (2 Sam. 8:2,6). Now how did they overcome and subdue them? The text saith, by faith; which we must not thus understand as though only by the very act of faith they subdued kingdoms. But the meaning of the Holy Ghost is that they believed the promises which God made unto them of delivering the kingdoms into their hands; and according to their faith, God accomplished His promises unto them; and so they subdued kingdoms by faith.

In this work of faith, we may learn two things:

(1) First, that it is lawful for Christians in the New Testament to make war; for that which may be done in faith, is lawful for God's

servants; but war may be made in faith; for these servants of God subdue kingdoms in war, and that by faith; and therefore it is lawful for Christians, upon just cause, to make war. The Anabaptists of Germany say that it is not lawful for a Christian under the gospel to carry a weapon or to make war. But this one place of Scripture (if there were no more) is alone sufficient to prove the lawfulness of war under the gospel, if it be used according to God's will and Word. When the soldiers came to John the Baptist, and asked him what they should do; he bids them not leave off their callings, but this: Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages (Luke 3:14). And our Saviour Christ reporteth of a centurion (who was captain of a band), when he came to have his son healed, that He had not found such faith in Israel (Luke 7:9). And he was not a centurion only before he believed; but even afterwards, when Christ commended his faith; yet did He not dislike his calling. The like may be said of Cornelius (Acts 10). All which shew plainly that upon just causes Christians may lawfully make war.

Objection 1: But to defend their opinion, they object some places of Scripture, as Matt 5:39, Resist not evil, saith Christ; therefore, say they, a man may not wear a weapon, nor use a sword; lest those make him to resist, and so to break this commandment of Christ. Answer: That place must be understood of private revenge; and so it maketh nothing against lawful war. For what though a private man may not revenge himself, nor make war; yet that hindereth not, but that a magistrate who bears the sword, may lawfully use it. Again, it is frivolous to imagine that resisting is only by a weapon; for the chief resistance that God respecteth is in the heart and affection. And a private man may resist; that is, break this commandment, by unlawful resistance, though he carry no weapons; and the public person break it not, though it make war.

Objection 2. Secondly, they object the prophecy of Isaiah who, speaking of the kingdom of Christ under the gospel, saith that they shall turn their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into mattocks (Isa. 2:4); therefore (say they) there must be no war under the gospel. Answer: That prophecy signifies that in Christ's kingdom there must be great love and peace, and wonderful concord among all the true servants of God. But here they take advantage, and say: If this be so, what then needeth any war? Answer: We must know that as there be two kinds of kingdoms, a spiritual kingdom, and a politick; so there be two kinds of peace: spiritual and politick. Spiritual peace is inward, in the church; and politick peace is outward, in the commonwealth. Spiritual peace is begun and preserved by spiritual means of grace in the ministry of the church; but war is an ordinary means for the establishing and preserving of politick peace.

(2) Secondly, hence we learn that God's people may make war, not only by way of defence; but also in assault upon their enemies, and that according to God's Word. For here it is said that Gideon, Samson, David and the rest by faith subdued kingdoms, making war against them by way of assault, and not in defence only. Indeed, special care ought to be had that offensive war, in assaulting an enemy, be made upon just and good grounds. One special ground or cause is here implied in this work of faith; to wit, the recovery of just right in matters of importance; for the kingdoms of Canaan were given to the Israelites by God Himself, and for the recovery of them, they made war by way of assault. So when Lot was taken captive by Chedorlaomer and the kings of the nations, Abraham, Lot's kinsman, gathers his servants together, and pursues the kings, and overtaking them, destroyed them for the recovery of Lot and his goods. Other respects there be for which offensive war in assault may be made; but because they are not here mentioned, I will not propound them.

2. The second fruit of their faith is this: they wrought righteousness; that is, some of these men in their places wherein God had set them, gave to every man his own. This working of righteousness consists in two things: First, in giving rewards to such as deserved them. Secondly, in inflicting due punishment according to men's deserts. In both of these, the men before named did all excel; but especially two of them, David and Samuel.

(1) For David, it is a wonder to see how righteous he was; for when he was anointed king in Saul's stead, and Saul rejected, how did he behave himself towards Saul? Did he seek Saul's blood? No; but when Saul hunted him, as the hunter doth the partridge, David even then gave himself to study and practice righteousness; yea, when Saul was fallen into his hands, both in the cave and asleep in the camp (1 Sam. 24:5ff, and 26:7ff.), he would not touch him, nor suffer others to do him hurt, because he was the Lord's anointed. Yea, so righteous was David towards Saul that his heart smote him for cutting off but the lap of his coat. Therefore David is here commended especially for this effect of faith, the working of righteousness.

To apply this unto our times; if this be a fruit of faith thus to work righteousness, then what may be said of the church of Rome, and of the popish sort amongst us? They pretend the ancient faith, and none must be so good believers and Catholics as they; but how do they shew this their faith? Is it by the practice of righteousness? Do they give to every one his due? Nay verily; but they set themselves to work the ruin of kingdoms that join not with them in religion. For this, witness their manifold and devilish plots against our state from time to time. This did not David, no not against Saul, though he were rejected of God, and also most unjustly sought his death. But they have many times sought the death of the Lord's anointed over us;

whereby they declare their state to all the world, that they have no spark of true faith at all; for true faith will make a man practice righteousness and innocency. And therefore we may judge of them, and all their adherents that be of this mind to allow such practices, that they have none other but the faith of devils; which is to believe the Word of God to be true. This the devils do with trembling. And as their faith is devilish, so are the fruits thereof; namely, treachery and falsehood, such as the devil most approves. But we must learn that true faith is especially commended by these fruits: the study and practice of innocency, and the maintaining of peace in Christian estates; for true faith, and treachery, and contention, will no more stand together than light and darkness.

(2) Secondly, Samuel also wrought righteousness; as appears by his protestation before all Israel, when he gave up his office of government over them unto Saul (1 Sam. 12). Behold (saith he) here am I: bear record of me before the Lord, and before His anointed; whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I done wrong to? or whom have I hurt? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe, to blind mine eyes therewith? And I will restore it.

Now, as these two, Samuel and David were famous for this fruit of faith in working righteousness; so likewise were the judges and prophets before-named in their places careful of this virtue; and did practice the same, partly in rewarding the good, and partly in punishing the wicked.

But some will say, To work righteousness cannot be a work of faith; for the very heathen, which never heard of Christ, by the light of nature have done justice, and are highly commended by heathen writers for the same. Now, that which the heathen can do by the light

of nature, is not thus to be extolled as a fruit of faith? Answer: True it is, the heathen have done many works of justice; but we must wisely consider that every just work is not a fruit of faith, unless it be done by a righteous person in obedience to God, and for His glory. But in all thee, the heathen failed in their works. For, though the thing they did were good in themselves; yet seeing the heathen were corrupt trees, remaining in the sinful state of corrupt nature, their works must needs be corrupt fruit; as coming from them. For an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. The heart is the fountain of every action; now their hearts were corrupt, being destitute of faith which purifieth the heart; and therefore their works must needs be sinful. Again, they did not their works in obedience; for they were guided only by the light of nature, and knew not God aright, nor His commandments. And lastly, they propounded not the glory of God, as the end of their works, but the praise of men, their own profit, or some such end. But these worthy persons do not only such things as were just in themselves, but they do them in faith, in obedience, and for God's glory, and so please God.

Now, seeing these renowned princes and judges have their faith commended unto us by their preaching of righteousness; we must learn to follow them within the compass of our calling, doing justice and righteousness in such things as concern us. There be many reasons set down in God's Word to persuade us hereunto. As first, for this end hath God caused the gospel to be published (Tit. 2:11,12), The saving grace of God hath appeared; but to what end? To teach us that we should deny ungodliness, and live soberly and righteously; that is, that we might do justice. Unless therefore we work righteousness, we make the gospel a vain word unto us. Secondly, we desire to be counted just before God and men; and it would grieve us if we should be otherwise thought of; but if we would be just indeed both before God and man, then we must work righteousness; for (as

St John saith) He that doeth righteousness is righteous (1 John 3:7). Thirdly, there is no man set over a family, but he either doth, or ought to endeavour to bring a blessing upon his family. But this he cannot do, unless he work righteousness, and do justice; for Solomon saith, He that walketh in his integrity is just, and blessed shall his children be after him (Prov. 20:7). Lastly, we do all of us desire to escape hell; well then we must remember to practice righteousness; for the apostle saith, No unrighteous man, that is, none practicing unrighteousness, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 6:9). So that within the compass of our calling, we must all endeavour to do justice.

Here, some will ask, How shall I do justice and work righteousness? Answer: For doing of it, we must remember to practice these rules that follow:

(1) That which is both the Word of God and the rule of nature; we must do to all men, as we would they should do unto us; this is the law and the prophets (saith our Saviour Christ, Matt. 7:12). Now, the square for all our actions must be the Word of God; and God's Word gives this direction: do thou to thy neighbour as thou in thy reason and conscience thinkest he should do to thee, if thou wert in his case, and he in thine.

(2) The second rule is that which Paul teacheth us, saying, Give to every man that which is their duty; tribute to whom tribute belongeth etc. (Rom. 13:7). That which God's Word and our conscience and the wholesome laws of the realm bind us unto, that we must give to every man.

(3) The third rule is this: Every man within the compass of his calling, must not only intend and labour for his own good, but for the common good in that church and commonwealth wherein he liveth.

The blind world, out of their carnal minds, have learned this for a rule: Every man for himself, and God for us all; and this is many a man's practice, he will labour diligently in his calling, but all is for himself. But he that propoundeth only this end in his calling, to benefit himself alone, dealeth unjustly, both towards the church and commonwealth in which he liveth, who ought to have a part of his care with himself.

(4) The fourth rule is taught us also by St Paul: Defraud or oppress no man in any matter (1 Thess. 4:6). This rule concerneth our manner of dealing in common affairs. In all our traffick and bargains, as we would benefit ourselves, so we must seek to benefit those with whom we deal. This rule is very necessary to be learned; for this is the common practice of men in their traffick: To use all means whereby they may defraud others; so that they get unto themselves, they care not how it come. But in the fear of God, let us remember that the practice of justice (to which we are all bound) standeth in this: that we defraud or oppress no man in anything.

And thus much of the second fruit of their faith.

3. The third fruit and effect of these men's faith is this: They obtained the promises. By promises, we must not understand the main promise concerning the Messiah's coming; for that they obtained not as yet for (as it appears in v.39) they received not that promise, for Christ was not incarnate in their time. But by promises are here meant certain special and particular promises, made unto them alone, and not common to all; so that the meaning of these words is this: They obtained the benefit and accomplishment of those particular promises that God made unto them. This effect is specially to be understood of Caleb and David; for Caleb entered into the land of Canaan, and there enjoyed his possession, according to God's

promise made unto him in Joshua chapter 14. So David had a particular promise made unto him, that he should be king over Israel; this he long waited for, and resting herein, he was not only anointed king, but in due time actually made king over all Israel.

Whereas these worthy men by faith obtained these promises; hereby we may be directed to see the true cause why, after so long preaching of the Word, and often receiving of the sacraments, men reap so little profit; especially considering that God hath made a promise of grace and salvation by means of His Word and sacraments. Hence therefore we must learn that the Word of God preached and the sacraments received, are unprofitable, not because God altereth His will, having promised His blessing in these means; for herein the will of God is unchangeable; but the cause is the great measure of unbelief in those which hear and receive. They therefore profit not, because they receive them without faith. For howsoever men say they have faith; yet the works of their lives, and their estate in sin, shew plainly that they have none at all. Take a vessel that is close stopped, and cast it into a river or into the sea; yet it receives no water, because it hath no place of entrance. Even so, bring a man that wants faith to the Word and sacraments, wherein God hath promised the fulness of His grace; yet he receives none, because his heart is closed up through unbelief. This is it which makes the heart like a stopped vessel, which hath no entrance for God's grace. We therefore in the fear of God, must labour to have our hearts purged of this unbelief and lip-faith; and to be endued with true saving faith; whereby we may profitably hear the Word and receive the sacraments, and to enjoy God's most excellent promises in Christ. Men may lie and be deceived, but God is truth itself and cannot lie; and therefore, as He hath made His promise of life to believers, and to no other; so will He assuredly accomplish the same to them, and to no other. Wherefore if we love our souls, and desire life, let us get into our

hearts the grace of faith. And thus much of the third effect of their faith.

4. The fourth and fifth effects, which I will handle together, are these: Stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of the fire. For the fourth: whereas some of these persons are said to have stopped the mouths of lions, it is to be understood of Daniel; as appeareth in the sixth chapter of that book. For Daniel (through the malice of others that incensed the king's wrath against him) was cast into the den of hunger-bit lions. But Daniel even then believed in the Lord, and put all his trust in God; and for this cause, the Lord by His angels stopped the mouths of lions and (as it were) sealed up their paws that they could not hurt him.

5. The fifth effect in quenching of the violence of the fire, must be understood of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the companions of Daniel; which three (as we may read in Daniel chapter 5) refused to worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up. For which cause they were cast into an hot burning oven. But they put their trust in God, and clave fast unto Him in obedience, even unto the hazard of their lives. Whereupon the Lord, by His omnipotent power, did most miraculously preserve them, by staying the rage of the fire, contrary to the nature thereof, that it had no power over their bodies; it did not burn the hair of their heads, nor cause their garments to smell. And therefore they are said to have quenched the violence of it, because it had no power over them, though it burned most fiercely; but was to them as though it had been quite put out and quenched.

Now, join these two effects together, and they afford us good instructions.

(1) First, here we learn how to behave ourselves in time of danger, and at the point of death. Even as these four men did, so must we from the bottom of our hearts forsake ourselves, and put all our trust in Christ. This did Daniel, when he was in the lions' den; and this did the three children in the hot fiery furnace. And this hath been always the ancient practice of God's children in all ages. At the very point of death, and in the extremity of all danger, they rested themselves wholly upon the merciful promises of the true God. The time will come upon us all wherein we shall be called unto the practice of this duty; for we must all pass the door of death, and once lie in the pangs thereof. Now what shall we do when we lie half dead, gasping and panting for breath, able to speak to no man, nor to hear any speaking unto us, when all comfort of the world fails us? Surely, we must then, at that very instant, labour to leave ourselves and this world, and yield up ourselves by faith into the hands of God, and cleave fast unto Christ's passion, from the bottom of our hearts, and He will surely deliver us from the danger; stopping the mouth of Satan, that roaring lion, and quenching the fire of hell, that it shall not touch us.

But some will say, If this be all we must do, then all is well; for this I can soon do when time serves, and therefore I will take no care until then. Answer: Beware of spiritual guile; for it will be found a most hard matter for a man to rely and cast himself wholly upon Christ, in the hour and pang of death. For then above all times is the devil busy against us; then will the conscience stir, if ever; and the body being tormented, the soul must needs be wonderfully heavy. This we may see by the state of our Saviour Christ, in His agony and passion; and therefore we must not reckon so lightly of this duty.

Question: But if it be so hard a thing, how could Daniel and the three children do it? Answer: They were prepared for it; for they rested upon God in the time of peace; and so were enabled to rely upon Him

in time of peril. Even so, if we would believe in God when we die, and then shew forth our faith, we must while we live put our trust in Him, and shew it by obedience; for rare it is to find a man that lives in unbelief, to shew forth faith at his end. And therefore while we have health, strength and peace, we must labour to believe, and then shall we find the comfort of it in time of peril, and of death.

(2) Secondly, from these two effects of faith, we observe further that God's divine providence doth firmly rule and govern the whole world. Ordinarily, God governs the world by secondary causes, setting one creature over another, and ordaining one to do this thing, and another that, and accordingly they work; but we must not think that God is bound to any of these means, but is most free to use them or not to use them. Ordinarily, He executeth this or that punishment by this or that creature, and so by means conveys His blessings; but yet He can work without them, as here we see. For He preserves His creatures against the ordinary means; as Daniel from the lions, whose nature is to devour; and against the nature of fire, he saved the three children in the fire. So that God worketh by means, but yet freely; because He can work at His pleasure. Either without or against means; and His powerful hand, saving against means, shews His ruling and disposing providence over all things.

(3) Thirdly, by these effects of their faith, we learn that God's goodness and mercy towards believers is far greater and more unspeakable than ever He promised, or they could expect. This point is carefully to be considered of us all; for it is of singular and extraordinary use, especially in time of peril and trouble; and yet we see it is the plain truth of God; and therefore Paul gives thanks and praise unto God, who is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (Eph. 3:20). Daniel put his trust in the Lord when he was in the lions' den; and what doth he obtain for his

labour? The Lord never promised to stop the lions' mouths, neither did Daniel ever presume upon that deliverance; and yet the Lord saved him. And so the three children though they made no account of their lives, because God had not promised to keep them from burning, yet they come out in safety. For God in mercy so quenched the heat of the fire unto them, that though it burnt to death those that cast them in; yet did it not so much as burn their garments, or the hair of their heads, to cause the same to smell. And the like is His goodness towards all His servants. David saith, The Lord prevented him with liberal blessings (Psa. 21:3), that is, when David never asked such blessings at God's hands, even then did the Lord bestow His liberal blessings upon him; as namely this, when David was following his father's sheep, and walking in his calling, he never dreamed of any kingdom; yet thence the Lord took him to be king over His people Israel. So the Israelites having been seventy years in captivity, never thought of return; and yet then were they delivered; and their deliverance was so strange and miraculous, that they were like men that dreamed (Psa. 126:1). When Peter was cast into prison by Herod, and committed to four quaternions of soldiers to be kept, the angel of the Lord came and awoke him as he slept, and led him out of prison, past the watches, and through the iron gate, and then left him. Now this deliverance was so strange unto him that he knew not whether it was true, but thought he had seen a vision (Acts 12:9). From hence it is that God hath made this gracious promise unto His church, to answer before they call, and to hear while they speak (Isa. 65:24). So endless is His mercy, and His goodness so unspeakable towards His servants, that if they cleave unto Him unfeignedly, they shall find His bounty far surpassing all that they could ask or think.

The consideration hereof serves to stir up every one of us in our places, to cleave unfeignedly unto the true God with all our hearts, by faith, in due reverence and obedience. If a servant were to choose his

master, and among an hundred should hear of one that besides his wages, would give unto his servants gifts which they would not think of; this servant would forsake all the rest to come unto this one. Behold, the Lord God is the bountiful master; who doth not only keep covenant with His servants, in a full accomplishment of His promises; but is exceeding gracious, preventing them with liberal blessings, above all that they could wish for themselves; wherefore let us forsake all our bad masters, the world, the flesh and the devil, in the service of sin; and resign ourselves with full purpose of heart, to serve this our good God, to the end of our days. There is no man living that can have such true joy in heart as God's servants have; for God shews more kindness to them than they can ask or think of. And take this for truth also; there be none that thus give themselves to serve God faithfully with all their hearts, but before they die they shall find this to be true, that God is a most merciful God, and His goodness endless towards them above their deserts.

Secondly, the endless mercy of God must move us all to repent of our sins, and to trust in Him for the pardon of them, be they never so many or heinous; for they can never reach to the multitude of His mercies. Though they be in number like the sand of the sea, they must not dismay us from coming unto Him; but considering that His goodness is endless, and His mercy is over all His works, we must come unto Him for the pardon of our sins. For God is merciful to perform His promise; yea, and beyond His promise, to do for us more than we can think of. Many indeed abuse this mercy of God by presuming thereon to go on in sin; but such deceive themselves, for God will not be merciful unto them (Deut. 29:20). It is the penitent person that shall find mercy.

6. The sixth effect of their faith is in these words: Escaped the edge of the sword. The words in the original are thus: Edge, they escaped of

the sword; which is the Hebrew phrase in the Old Testament, and here followed by the penman of this epistle; and before, where he called the Word of God a two-mouthed sword (Heb. 4:12), hereby meaning (as it is translated) a two-edged sword. This effect must be understood of two worthy prophets, Elijah and Elisha; for Elijah, we may read that when he had slain Baal's priests (1 Kin. 19:1), Jezabel the queen threatened to kill him; which he hearing fled into the wilderness, and thence was led to mount Horeb, and there escaped by means of his faith. And for Elisha, we may read that when he disclosed the king of Syria his counsel to the king of Israel (2 Kin. 6:8ff.), he was compassed about in Dothan, the city where he lay, with a huge host of Assyrians; but praying to the Lord, the Lord smote the host with blindness, and so the prophet led them in safety to Samaria. So then, the meaning of this effect is that when the servants of God were in distress and danger of death, they denied themselves, and their own help, and by faith relied upon God unfeignedly, from the bottom of their hearts; and so found deliverance with God from the peril of death.

(1) First, here we learn that God provides for the safety and deliverance of His servants, in the extremity of peril and danger, when both might and multitude are against them. This point we have touched in divers examples before, and therefore do here only name it.

(2) Secondly, in that these men in the extremity of danger believed, and so escaped the edge of the sword; we learn that when we are in greatest danger, so as we see no way to escape; even then we must put our trust in the true God, and He will save us. This we must do, not only for the safety of our body; but more especially for the salvation of our soul. Put the case a man were in despair of his salvation, and that he sees legions of devils compassing him about to

take him away; what must this man do in this case? Answer: Look what Elijah and Elisha did, the same thing must he do; he must not lie dead in desperation, yielding thereto; but at the very same time, when such terrors oppress him, he must by faith lift up his heart to God, and put his trust and confidence in Him through Christ. And if he can do this, he may assure himself that he shall certainly escape these fearful terrors of conscience, and the torments of hell, as Elijah and Elisha did the edge of the sword; for let a man put his whole trust in God, and whatsoever his troubles be, God will deliver him. Great are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all (Psa. 34:19). Indeed we must not limit God for time or manner of deliverance; but wait on God by faith, accounting His grace sufficient, till deliverance come. And thus much of the sixth effect.

7. The seventh effect of their faith is this: Of weak were made strong; or thus: Of weak were restored to health. This must be understood of Hezekiah, a worthy king of Judah, who (as we may read in 2 Kings 20) being sore sick even unto death, was restored to health, and obtained of God the lengthening of his days for the space of fifteen years. Which wonderful recovery he obtained by means of his faith, which he shewed in time of his sickness by a prayer he made unto God; the substance whereof stood in these two things: First, being very sick, he prayed for the pardon of his sins. This appeareth by his thanksgiving upon his recovery (Isa 38:17), where he confesseth that God had cast all his sins behind His back. Now look for what he gave thanks that (no doubt) he had before begged of God in prayer. Secondly, he made request unto God for prolonging of his days, for some reasons which did concern himself; and this he also prayed for in faith.

Now, the reasons moving him to pray for longer life were these:

(1) First, he had then no issue to succeed him in his kingdom; and therefore he prayed for life to beget a child which might sit upon his throne after him. And the ground of this prayer was this: God had made a particular promise to David and Solomon (1 Kin. 8:25) that they should not want issue after them to sit upon the throne of Israel, so that their children took heed to their way, to walk before the Lord, as David did. Now king Hezekiah, knowing this promise, had regard hereunto; and building himself hereon, his conscience bearing him witness that he had walked before the Lord uprightly, he prays for issue to succeed him; and for that cause, he desires strength of body and length of days. This appeareth notably by his prayer (2 Kin. 20). Lord (saith he), I beseech thee now remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart. The sum of his prayer is this: All the kings succeeding David and Solomon, which walk in God's commandments, shall have issue to sit on their thrones after them. Now from hence he prays thus: O Lord, I have walked before thee in truth and sincerity of heart; and hereupon the conclusion follows: Grant me issue to sit upon my throne after me; and therefore life and health to accomplish the same.

(2) Secondly, he prayed that he might live to glorify God in that weighty calling wherein God had placed him over His people. This appeareth likewise by his thanksgiving unto the Lord upon his recovery, where he saith (Isa. 38:20), The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my song all the days of our life in the house of the Lord. Thus by his worthy prayer, he shewed forth his faith notably; by virtue whereof, being sick unto death, he obtained of the Lord the prolonging of his days, for the space of fifteen years. And so we see to whom this seventh effect of faith is to be referred.

Here we are taught a special duty for the recovery of our health, in the time of sickness; to wit, before we use the ordinary means of

physick, we must (according to this example) first put our faith in practice by humbling ourselves for our sins past, confessing them truly unto God, and praying for pardon from a resolute purpose of heart to lead a new life; and also by entreating health of God, and His good blessing upon the means which we shall use for our recovery. Thus have others of God's servants done besides Hezekiah. When David was grievously sick, the principal thing he did was this practice of faith; in humbling his soul before God for his sins, and entreating earnestly the pardon of them, as we may see (Psa. 6 and 38). This is the principal thing which in those psalms is propounded of David. And so the apostle counsels (Jam. 5:14,15), Is any man sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and what must they do? Surely, first, pray for him; and then (as the custom was in those days) anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up again; and if he have committed any sin, it shall be forgiven him. And here we must be admonished to beware of the bad practices of the world in this case; the most men in their sickness, first seek to the physicians; and if that fail them, then they send for the minister. This was king Asa's practice, for which he is branded to all posterity, that being diseased in his feet, he sought unto physicians, and not unto the Lord (2 Chr. 16:12), though otherwise he had good things in him (1 Kin. 15:14). And many do far worse, who seek to witches and enchanters, when they or theirs are in distress; but this is to forsake God, and to seek help of the devil, like to king Ahaziah, who sent to Baalzebub the god of Ekron to know of his recovery, when he was sick upon a fall (2 Kin. 1:2). This should be far from all God's children, for as Ahaziah's sickness became deadly, through his sending to Baalzebub; so undoubtedly, many diseases become incurable by the bad and preposterous dealing of the patient, who either useth unlawful means, or lawful means disorderly, or trusteth therein. We therefore

in this case must remember our duty in the practice of faith, as Hezekiah did.

8. The eighth fruit of faith is this: Waxed valiant in battle. This effect may well be understood of all the judges before-named, and of all the good kings in Judah and Israel. But yet there be two especially to whom we may more peculiarly refer it; to wit, Samson and David. For Samson, he by means of faith came to be so mighty (Jud. 15:15), that with the jawbone of an ass he slew a thousand Philistines. And for David, he likewise was so encouraged by faith, that with the same sling wherewith he kept his father's sheep (which was but a slender weapon for war), he encountered with Goliath, that huge Philistine, and hit him with a stone in the forehead, and slew him. Both these facts were the fruits of their faith, which made them bold to encounter with these mighty enemies.

In this effect of their faith:

(1) First, we may observe that true fortitude and manhood, right valour and courage, comes from true faith. It must be granted that many heathen men had great strength and courage, but indeed it was but a shadow of true valour; for right valour comes from a believing heart. And therefore it is said that these judges and princes of Israel waxed strong in battle by faith.

(2) Secondly, doth true faith make men valiant in battle? Then should the preaching of the Word be set up and maintained, as well in the camp and garrison, and among soldiers on the seas; as in cities and towns of peace. For the preaching of the Word is the means of this faith, which gives valour in battle to them that fight in a good cause.

Hence it was that the Lord enjoined by Moses that when the people of Israel went out to battle, the priests should come forth and encourage the people, that their hearts might not faint, nor fear, nor dread their enemies; because of the powerful presence of God fighting for them. The papists object this (by way of reproach) against Zwingli, who was one of the reformers of the gospel; that he died in the field amongst soldiers; but this indeed is not reproach, but rather a matter of great commendation unto him; in that, for the increase of faith and knowledge in them that were weak Christians about him, he was content to hazard his own life.

And thus much of the eighth effect.

9. The ninth effect of faith for which these worthy men are commended is this: They turned to flight the armies of the aliens. This may be understood of the most of the judges, and of the good kings of Judah and Israel. But I will make choice, especially of two, Gideon and Jehosaphat; for Gideon, one of the judges, with three hundred soldiers (Jud. 7:7), altogether unweaponed, only with lamps in their hands, put to flight a mighty army of the Midianites. And Jehosaphat, a godly king, being assaulted with a mighty and great army of the Moabites, Ammonites and men of mount Seir, knew that by force of arms he could not withstand them; and therefore by faith makes a worthy prayer unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him, and set his enemies one against another, and so did he put them to flight, which he could never have done by any strength of his own.

Here we may learn how kingdoms and people may become able to put to flight their enemies. The best way is to put in practice their faith in God; by humbling themselves truly for their past sins, with unfeigned confession of them unto God, praying withal earnestly for the pardon of them; and for God's aid, assistance and protection

against their enemies. The power of this means is evident in Scripture; and therefore when Elijah was taken, Elisha cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof (2 Kin. 2:12), giving him this notable commendation: that he was good to Israel, by means of his faith, as all their chariots and horsemen. Question: How could this possibly be true? Answer: If we read the story, we shall find it to be most true, that by his prayers which he made in faith, he did as much or more than all the strength of the land could do. And so it shall be with all Christian kings and people; if they can shew forth their faith, by prayer unto God, they shall do wonderfully much hereby, in subduing their enemies.

To apply this to ourselves; we have had many and dangerous assaults from popish enemies, both domestic and foreign, who have of a long time, and no doubt still do, purpose our overthrow. Now, how shall we be able to withstand their might, and to escape their malice? True it is that Christian policy and warlike provision must be used; yet our stay and rest must not be thereon; but we must stir up our faith, both magistrates and subjects, prince and people; and first of all humble ourselves for our sins, and shew forth our repentance by new obedience in time to come; and then pray for a blessing upon the outward means which shall be used. This is the right practice of faith, in the case of danger by our enemies; which we shall find (if we exercise it unfeignedly) to be a surer means of safety and victory against our enemies than all worldly munition and policy. For hereby we shall have the Lord for our protection and His blessing upon the outward means, giving strength and good success thereunto; whereas, omitting this duty, the Lord will not be with us, and then we shall find that vain is the strength or wit of man. Let us not therefore betray ourselves against all our enemies whatsoever; otherwise we may justly fear to be delivered into their hands for a prey unto their teeth. And therefore if we love our own safety and the welfare of our

land, let us practice this duty; for the prayer of faith availeth much with God, if it be fervent (Jam. 5:16); and therefore the Lord saith to Moses, when he fell down before Him, to turn back the wrath that was broken in upon the people, Let me alone (Ex. 32:10); as though Moses had held or bound the Lord's hand by his prayer, that He could not smite His people. And thus much for the ninth fruit of faith.

The women received their dead raised to life.

10. This is the tenth and final fruit of faith, which must be understood of these two women especially: the widow of Zarephath and the Shunamite. The widow of Zarephath, giving entertainment to Elijah in the great famine, had this blessing vouchsafed unto her for her faith, that her dead son was restored to life by the prophet. And the Shunamite that provided lodging for the prophet Elisha, had her only son restored to life from death by the prophet through faith. Now here we must observe that these two women did not only believe in the true God; but more particularly that God would use these His servants as means to restore to life their two children that were dead; as appears by this: that both of them made means to the prophet for the reviving of their children; which they did by faith.

But some will say, This last effect of faith may seem to cross the Scripture elsewhere; which saith that Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep (1 Cor. 15:20). How then could these that were before Christ's incarnation be restored from death to life? Answer: St Paul's meaning is this, that Christ is the first of all those that rose from death to life, to die no more, but to live for ever. So indeed Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep; for He rose to live for ever. As for these two, and some others mentioned both in the Old Testament

and in the New, that were raised from death to life, they rose not from the sleep of death to live for ever, but to die again.

In this tenth fruit of faith, all parents may learn their duty towards their children in the case of sickness or such like. They must follow the example of these two godly women, and labour especially to shew forth their faith in such duties as God requireth in such a case; to wit, they must humble themselves for their own sins, and for the sins of their children and family; praying earnestly to God for the pardon of them (for God may visit the iniquity of the parents upon the children in bodily judgments) and entreating the Lord to restore them to health and liberty; and withal, they must use the ordinary lawful means of recovery in physick and such like, praying to God for a blessing thereupon.

This is their duty, but (alas!) the manner and practice of many parents is far otherwise; for whereas they should first seek unto the Lord, and come to His prophet, they either come first to the ordinary means of physick; or being worse disposed, seek help of wizards and blessers by their charms and forgeries forsaking God; and running to the devil. Indeed, the use of lawful means is not to be discommended simply; but this preposterous course is blameworthy, and deprives many of God's blessings in the means, that seek help of physick before they have sought to the Lord in this holy practice of faith.

Question: But how can the parents' faith benefit the child? Answer: It cannot procure unto it eternal life; for everyone must be saved by his own faith in Christ. And yet the child receives many a good blessing at God's hand by means of the parents' faith; as namely, the benefit of the covenant of grace in the seals thereof; besides the fruition of many temporal blessings, as life itself in this place.

The consideration hereof must move all parents, above all things, to labour for true faith; for by the practice thereof, they shall be able to bring the greatest blessing upon themselves and their children, and upon the lawful means which they shall use for their good. Say the Lord shall lay his hand upon children and servants in a family, what must parents and masters do? Surely the best way for help is the practice of faith in true humiliation for sin and prayer to God for mercy, and for a blessing upon the means which they shall use. In all societies this is true, that by the faith of the governors, many curses are removed, and many blessings procured. God sends His judgments among us daily, and we know not when other more shall befall us; but for removal and preventing of them, we must give ourselves to true humiliation and prayer; and so we shall find the Lord's mercy towards us, as these two women did.

And thus much of this tenth fruit of faith, and of them all severally.

Now from them all jointly together, observe this special point: That faith is such a grace of God as doth bring down from heaven, upon every believer, all God's blessings that are merciful for him. Who is he that desires not to be made partaker of God's blessings needful for him, both in soul and body? Well; the only way and means hereto, is to get a true and a lively faith, and to put the same in practice, in all such duties as God shall require at our hands. The worthy men before named, obtained all the former most wonderful blessings, by means of their faith. By it they escaped the edge of the sword, they quenched the violence of the fire, waxed mighty in battle etc., as we have heard.

Now if faith be such a notable grace of God, then above all things in this world, let us labour for it. We must not content ourselves with lip-faith, and so presume upon God's mercies; but we must labour

for a true and a lively faith in Christ, which may purify our hearts, and bring forth fruit in our lives. Here are strong motives to persuade us hereunto; for what do we desire? Riches, honour, or favour and grace in the world? Would we have health and strength? Nay, the favour of God, which is all in all? Then look to get true faith; for in the practice thereof, thou shalt obtain of God, all needful blessings, both temporal and spiritual. Many toil themselves exceedingly by worldly means to get temporal blessings, as health, wealth, honour etc., and yet never attain thereunto, because they seek them not by faith. I confess, natural men get many good things; but to them they are no blessings; because they want faith, both in getting and keeping of them; for they lay all religion aside, and toil themselves wholly in worldly means. This course the child of God must beware of. Say that a prince bids one of his servants to go to his treasury, and there enrich himself with jewels, with gold and silver, and with whatsoever he lacketh; what will this man do? Surely, first he will call for the keys, whereby he may unlock the doors and chests; for else he can get nothing. Behold, in the ministry of His Word, God shews us His full treasury, wherein we may enrich ourselves with all His blessings. Now, we must not with the fool run without the key, but labour first for true faith; which is that key whereby God's heavenly treasures are opened unto us; and we must be sure that we have a sound key; that is, a true and sound faith, which may strongly turn about the locks of God's treasury. For this it is most certain: he that doth unfeignedly believe, shall never want anything, either in body or soul, that is good for him to have. Every one will say he believes; but the truth is, that true faith is rare; for mens' hearts are not purified, nor their lives changed; but they remain as sinful as ever they were, which causeth God's judgments to be so rife among us. Wherefore as we desire our own good both in soul and body; so let us labour for true faith, and shew forth the power of it in our lives.

And thus much of these judges and prophets, and of the fruits of their faith.

III. Others also were racked, and would not be delivered; that they might receive a better resurrection.

In these words, the author of this epistle proceeds to the fourth order of examples of faith contained in this chapter; wherein (as in the former lastly handled) he proceeds briefly, heaping up in few words, many worthy examples of faith, concealing the names of the parties, and only setting down those things for which their faith is commended unto us. And this fourth and last order of examples, comprehendeth such believers as lived under the regiment of the Maccabees; and afterward to the coming of Christ. For of believers in former times it cannot be understood, because there is a manifest distinction put between these believers and the former judges, kings and prophets; in these words: Others also; whereby it is plain that here he propounds examples of believers different from those which he mentioned before. And it is also plain that these believers lived before the coming of Christ. For howsoever the Christians in the primitive church were racked, scourged and tormented after this sort; yet of them this place cannot be understood, because they enjoyed the promise of the Messiah; but these here mentioned enjoyed not that promise in their days, but waited for it by faith, and therein died (v.39). And indeed, in the time of the Maccabees, the church of the Jews was wonderfully persecuted by Antiochus, about two hundred years before Christ, as we may see in 2 Macc, 4th and 6th chapters.

Question: Where had the author of this epistle this large narration of these strange persecutions, seeing they are not registered in the books of the Old Testament? Answer: We may judge that he gathered

it out of the stories and records of men; which (howsoever they be not now extant) yet in his days in the primitive church, were extant, known and approved. Neither must this seem strange unto us; for the Spirit of God, in the Old Testament speaking of men, hath oftentimes reference and relation therein to human writings; as this phrase : The rest of the acts of such and such, are they not written in the books of the Chronicles of the kings of Judah and Israel?, so often used in the books of Kings and Chronicles, doth evidently declare.

Now those books of the Chronicles were not parcels of Holy Scripture, but civil, or ecclesiastical stories, like to our books of Martyrs and Chronicles. St Paul saith (2 Tim. 3:8), Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses. Now, in the book of Exodus, we shall not find the sorcerors that withstood Moses once named. And St Jude maketh mention of a prophecy of Enoch (v.14), which in all the Old Testament is not recorded; and it is likely that Moses was the first penman of Holy Scripture. Whence then knew these apostles these things? Answer: No doubt the Holy Ghost might reveal such things unto them, though they had been unknown in those times; but it is more probable that the apostles had them out of some Jewish writers, or records then extant, and approved among the Jews. So Paul preaching to the Athenians (Acts 17:28), allegeth the saying of Aratus, an Athenian poet: For we are His generation. And to the Corinthians, he propoundeth a sentence of Moniander: Evil words corrupt good manners (1 Cor. 15:33). And to Titus, he allegeth Epimenides, a Cretan poet (Tit. 1:12) Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.

Now whereas the Spirit of God taketh these sentences out of the writings of men, we may learn that to read the writings of men is not unlawful, but a thing of good use to the servants of God. But whereas

some would hence prove that their authority may be alleged ordinarily at every man's pleasure in the public ministry, it hath no ground in these places. For first, the apostles were so guided by the Holy Ghost in their public ministry that they could not err; but no ministers at this day have such a privilege. Secondly, the apostles alleging or recording the sayings of men in their sermons and writings, did thereby sanctify them, and make them to become a part of Holy Scripture. This no ordinary minister can do; but let him allege a human testimony ten thousand times, yet still it remaineth human, and is not God's Word. Thirdly, they that would warrant their practice in alleging human testimonies in their sermons by the apostles, ought to follow the apostles in their manner of allegations. Now the apostles were so sparing herein, that in many books we shall not find one; for there are only three in all the New Testament. Again, the apostles did it without any ostentation; for the names of the authors are concealed whence they took their testimonies.

And lastly, the apostles did it upon weighty cause and just occasion; to wit, when they were persuaded in conscience, that those testimonies would convince the consciences of their hearers in those things for which they allege them. Now how far many differ from the apostles in their allegations, let the world judge.

Yet before we come to speak of these examples of faith in particular, there are sundry general points to be handled:

1. In the three former verses, the Spirit of God hath set down the prosperous success of believers through faith; but here he comes to acquaint us with a different estate of other believers under grievous persecutions and torments, even to most cruel and bitter bonds of death.

From this which the apostle here observeth, we may take a view of the state of God's church and people here in this world. For God vouchsafeth peace and prosperous success to some, as a just reward of faith and obedience; but others must want the comfort of outward peace and welfare, and undergo most grievous trials and persecutions. Look as there is a continual interchange between day and night, and the one doth constantly follow the other, so as it is one while day, and another while night; so it is with the church of God, and with true believers in this world; sometimes they have peace and prosperity; and this continueth not always; but another while they are in trouble, misery and persecution.

To make this point more plain, because it is of some importance; we may behold the truth of it in the church of God from the beginning. Adam's family was God's church, and therein was first notable peace; but when God accepted Abel's sacrifice, and refused Cain's, then persecution began, and Cain slew his brother Abel. Abraham is called the father of the faithful, and his family in those days was the true church of God; wherein we may notably see this changeable estate; for God calls him out of Haran to dwell in the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1). But within a while, the famine was so great in the land, that he was fain to go down to Egypt to sojourn there. And there the Lord blessed him exceedingly, and enriched him so greatly that he became a mighty prince, able to encounter with the kings of those nations in battle, after his return to Canaan (Gen. 14).

The Israelites, God's chosen people, were 400 years in bondage in Egypt; but at the appointed time, God gave them a glorious deliverance; and yet they were tried in the wilderness 40 years; after which time they were planted safely in the fruitful land of Canaan, a land that flowed with milk and honey. And there also, the church of God was in this case: sometimes in prosperity, and otherwhiles in

adversity, for when it was ruled by judges (as in that book appears) for ten, twenty, thirty or forty years together, the Israelites for their sins, were in subjection and bondage to the nations round about them; as the Moabites, the Philistines, the Ammonites etc. Yet then, when they cried to God, He sent them some mighty judge to deliver them, for so long time again. This was the interchangeable estate of the church, all the time of the judges. And afterward, when it was governed by kings, it was in the same case; for one while God gave them good kings, who would advance religion, and maintain and cherish the priests and prophets of God; and for their time the church prospered. But otherwhiles, for their sins, God would send them wicked princes; which persecuted the prophets and the godly in the land. This is plain in the books of the Kings and Chronicles. After the reign of good king Josiah came the captivity into Babylon, and after 70 years expired, the Lord by king Cyrus returned them again. After their return they were for a while in peace, and another while in distress; as we may see in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. But above all other, that persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes was the most notorious, which was foretold by Daniel in his prophecy (Dan. 11:36), and is recorded in the books of the Maccabees.

To come to the time of the gospel; the primitive church, after the ascension of Christ, in the first 300 years, suffered ten most bloody and grievous persecutions; between each of which, she had some times of peace, and (as it were) respite to breathe in. And after the tenth persecution ended, the Lord raised up the good emperor Constantine, who brought peace and welfare to the church. But soon after him, the heresy of Arius, raised up by the devil, brought us grievous persecutions on the church, as ever the pagans did; being a most blasphemous heresy, denying the eternal deity of Christ and of the Holy Ghost; and it prevailed in the church for 80 years. Not long after the suppression of that heresy, began the idolatry and tyranny

of Antichrist to prevail in the church for many hundred years. And now, about four score years ago, the Lord in mercy raised up worthy instruments, by whose means He delivered his church from that idolatry and blindness; yet so, as still the church hath felt the bloody hand of Antichrist in grievous persecutions. All of which shews this to be most true: that the outward state of God's church is interchangeable, having one while peace, and another while grievous persecution.

To apply this to ourselves; God hath planted His church among us in this land, and for many years together, hath blessed us with prosperity and peace; which in great mercy He hath given us, as a reward of the faith of His servants which are among us; and during this time, we have had great freedom and liberty in God's holy ministry, for the Word, prayer and sacraments. But we must know that the state of God's church, for peace and trouble, is interchangeable, as day and night for light and darkness. Wherefore we must be advertised to look unto ourselves; for our estate in peace must not last always; these golden days will have an end, and troubles and afflictions will undoubtedly come. Indeed God only knoweth what kind of afflictions shall befall, and the particular time thereof; but that they shall come in the time appointed of God, we may resolve ourselves by the reasons following.

(1) First, the tenor of the law is this: that the curse doth follow the transgression; so that when any man, or family, or people, live in breach of God's commandments, they must look for God's judgments to be poured upon them. Now we may too truly assume that this our nation and people abound with grievous sin in all estates. For in the civil estate (to omit the manifold practices of oppression), where is justice without bribery? Or bargaining without fraud and deceit? And in the ministry (beside many abuses), where is that care which ought

to be for the building of God's church? And for the body of our people (beside gross ignorance and superstition), what fearful blasphemy, whoredom, swearing and Sabbath breaking doth everywhere abound? Beside fearful atheism, which is a mother of abominations; whether we respect natural atheism, whereby many deny God by their works, or learned atheism in some, who dispute against the truth of God revealed in His Word. All these, and many other sins among us, cry loud for God's judgments upon us; even for that fearful judgment, the removal of God's kingdom in the gospel of peace.

(2) Secondly, consider what manner of persons of place, and note, both in church and commonwealth, God takes from us by death, even in their best time; are they not such as excelled among us, for great wisdom and learning, and for true piety and good conscience? Now howsoever this may seem but a small thing in the eyes of many; yet undoubtedly, it is a forerunner of God's judgments; for the righteous perish, and no man considereth it in heart; and merciful men are taken away, and no man understandeth that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come (Isa. 57:1).

(3) Thirdly, God hath set His fearful judgments among us and about us, war and sword in our neighbouring nations; which also hath been often shaken at us; also famine and pestilence throughout our own land, by intercourse and long continuance (Lev. 26). Now this is the truth of God, that when God sends His judgments upon a people, if they do not repent, one judgment is but the forerunner of another more grievous and terrible than the former. But little or no repentance appears among us; nay rather, we fall away more and more, and so stand still in danger of more fearful judgments.

(4) Lastly, it is usual with God thus to deal with His own servants: as He doth sometime reward their faith and obedience with peace; so otherwhiles He will try their faith by affliction. Thus He dealt with His servant Job, though there were none for piety like him in his time through all the world. Now God hath His servants among us, for the trial of whose faith we may persuade ourselves some tribulation shall come upon us; for all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer tribulation (2 Tim. 3:12).

This being so that our peace shall be turned into trouble (as by the former reasons, which directly fasten themselves upon our church and state, may evidently appear), let us then here learn our duty.

(1) First, we must cast with ourselves what may be the worst that can befall us, when persecution and trial shall come. This is the counsel of our Saviour Christ to those that would follow Him constantly as good disciples; they must, as good builders, consider of the cost before they lay the foundation; and like good warriors, consider of their strength before they go out into the field, lest they leave off, and turn back, like fools and cowards (Luke 14:28ff.). We by God's mercy do now profess the true religion of Christ, with hope to be saved thereby; therefore we must cast with ourselves what our religion may cost us, and see beforehand what is the worst thing that may befall us for our profession of Christ and His gospel. If we have not done this in the beginning of our profession, we must now do it; for better late than never; lest going on securely, without this account making, we shamefully forsake Christ when trial comes.

In former times, the constant profession of Christ hath cost men loss of friends, loss of goods and liberty; yea, the loss of their heart's blood; and the same case may befall us. Wherefore, we must cast with ourselves, and see whether we be willing to suffer the loss of

goods and friends; yea, the loss of our lives, for the defence of Christ's true religion.

(2) Again, as this estate of the church must move us to make this account, for resolution in suffering; so it must teach us to labour for those saving graces of God's Spirit which may enable us to stand fast in all temptations, troubles and persecutions. We must not content ourselves with blazing lamps, as the five foolish virgins did; but get the oil of grace into the vessels of our hearts. Knowledge in the Word is a commendable thing; but not sufficient to make us stand in the day of trial. We therefore must labour for true saving graces; especially for this: to have our hearts rooted and grounded in the love of God, through faith; whereby we are assured that God is our Father in Christ, and Jesus Christ our Redeemer, and the Holy Ghost our Comforter and sanctifier. This assurance of faith will establish our hearts in all estates; come life, come death, we need not fear; for nothing shall be able to separate us from this love of God in Christ Jesus.

2. And thus much of the coherence of this verse with the former. Now to the words.

Others also were racked etc.

Here the Holy Ghost begins to propound the fruits of faith, for which this last rank of believers are commended to us. And they are not such famous exploits as the former, but nine several kinds of sufferings; unto all which we must remember to apply this clause by faith; from v.33; as thus, Through faith they endured racking, mocking, and so for all the rest.

Out of these effects in general, we may learn two things:

(1) First, a singular fruit of faith, for which it is here so highly commended in this last rank of examples; to wit, that by it the child of God is enabled to bear whatsoever the Lord shall lay upon him. The torments wherewith man's body may be afflicted, are many and terrible; and yet, be they never so many, nor so terrible, true saving faith will make the child of God to bear them all for the honour of Christ.

The effects of faith before set down, were many and singular; but undoubtedly, this strength of patience, which it giveth under the greatest torments for Christ's sake, is one of the principal.

This Paul doth notably testify in his profession (Rom. 8:38,39), I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of Christ which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Oh, singular power of faith! Which so firmly unites the believer unto Christ, that no torments in the world, no not all the power of Satan and his angels, can separate them asunder.

Question: How does faith work this indissoluble power in cleaving unto Christ? Answer: After this manner: It is the property of faith to persuade the conscience of God's love and favour in Christ; and upon this persuasion, the heart begins to love God again. Now by this love doth faith work, and make a man able to bear all torments that can be inflicted for religion's sake; for love suffereth all things (1 Cor. 13:7), even that love wherewith one man loveth another; how much more then shall this love wherewith we love God in Christ, make us to suffer anything for His name's sake? Hence it is that love is said to be strong as death; and the coals thereof are fiery coals, and a vehement flame; yea, much waters cannot quench love, neither can

the flood drown it (Song 8:6,7); that is, grievous persecutions and torments cannot extinguish the same. Nay, such is the power of love to God when it is fervent, that it makes a man so zealous of God's glory, that if there were no other way to glorify God than by sufferings; the child of God would rather yield himself to endure the torments of the damned, than suffer God to lose His glory. This we may see in Paul (Rom. 9:2,3), I would wish myself (saith he) to be separate from Christ for my brethren that are my kinsmen according to the flesh; that is, the Israelites; meaning for the advancement of God's glory in their calling and salvation. Such zeal we may see in Moses; for thinking that God should lose His glory if the Israelites were destroyed, he prays the Lord to pardon their sin. But if thou wilt not, then (saith he) erase me out of the book which thou hast written (Exod. 32:32).

This being the fruit of faith: To make a man able and willing to suffer anything for Christ's sake; we must hereby be moved to labour for true faith; for tribulation may come; nay, some affliction will come on every child of God more or less. Now without faith we shall never be able to glorify God under the cross. The just must live by faith in this estate (Heb. 10:38), as here they endure racking, burning, hewing asunder, etc.

(2) Secondly, out of all these sufferings here endured by faith, note the mind and disposition of ungodly men towards God's church and people: they are most bitterly and bloodily bent against them; for here they put in execution upon God's children whatsoever cruelty the devil could suggest in their hearts. And this hath been their disposition and behaviour, not only before Christ's incarnation, but also ever since; as may appear by the manifold strange tortures devised against Christians in the primitive church; and both then and since inflicted upon them. Behold it in the church of Rome,

especially in their late Inquisition; whereby, beside the cruel racking of the conscience by unjust enquiries, they put the Protestants to most cruel torments.

The consideration of this cruel disposition in the wicked, against the godly, is of special use:

(i) First, it proves to us that the religion which by God's mercy we profess, contained in the books of the Old and New Testaments, is no politick device of man, but the sacred ordinance of the everlasting God. For, if it were the invention of man, it would so fit their humour, and accord with their nature, that generally it would be loved and embraced, and not one of an hundred would mislike it. But we see it is generally detested; This sect is everywhere spoken against (Acts 28:22). Natural men reject it and persecute it, and the professors of it, unto the death. This they do, because true religion is contrary to their nature, as light is to darkness; and condemns those ways and courses which they best like of. This reason shall justify true religion to be God's own ordinance, even to the conscience of the worldly atheist; his devilish malice against it proves God's divine truth to be in it.

(ii) Secondly, do the wicked hate the godly because of their religion and profession? Then, on the contrary, we must learn to love religion because it is religion; and the professors of it for their profession's sake. This is Christ's instruction: to love a disciple because he is a disciple (Matt. 10:42). Indeed, we must love all men; but especially those that embrace the gospel of Christ, and be of the household of faith; for all such are brethren having one Father, which is God; and brethren ought to love one another . But alas, this lesson is not learned; for the world generally is given to mocking and scoffing; and the matter of their mocking is religion and the professors thereof.

This ought not to be so; for howsoever men may fail both in knowledge and practice, yet the professors of religion should not so be despised. This abuse is grown to such an height, that many refrain from the diligent hearing of the Word preached, lest they should be mocked. But let these mockers know that herein they shake hands with the devil, and with the persecutors of God's church; for mocking is a kind of persecution. Young Christians should not be so dealt with; but rather encouraged, for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. Thus dealt our Saviour Christ with those that gave any testimony of the sparks of grace; when the young man said, he had from his youth kept God's commandments, the text saith, Jesus beheld him and loved him (Mark 10:21), and hearing a scribe answer discreetly, He said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God (Mark 12:34). Now we must be followers of Christ and walk in love, judging and speaking the best of all professors, accounting none for hypocrites, till God make their hypocrisy known. It is a note of a Christian to love a man because he loves religion; on the contrary, to hate a man because he is a Christian is a note of a persecutor, and an enemy to Christ. And thus much in general.

Now we come in particular to the several kinds of suffering which these believers endured by faith; the first whereof is racking; in these words: others also were racked; or, as some translate it, And others were beaten with clubs. For the word in the original will bear either translation; and both of them fitly agree to this kind of suffering. For in these times, the enemies of God's church used to set the bodies of them that were to be tormented upon racks and engines; whereon they stretched out every joint, and then did beat the whole body thus racked with clubs, till the party were stark dead. An example of this kind of suffering we have in Eleazer a Jew (1 Macc. 6), who under Antiochus was first racked, and then beaten on every part of his body unto the death; because he refused to eat swine's flesh.

But some will say: This cannot be any commendation of faith, to be racked and beaten to death; for malefactors and traitors are so used. Answer: To prevent this objection, the Holy Ghost addeth these words: and would not be delivered; or, would not accept deliverance; to shew that this suffering was a notable commendation of true faith. The meaning of the words is this: That whereas some Jews in the Old Testament were condemned to death for their religion by persecutors; and yet had life and liberty offered unto them if they would recant and forsake their religion. This proffer of life they refused, and would not be delivered upn such a condition.

In this example of faith we are taught to hold fast to true religion, and to prefer the enjoying of it before all the pleasures and commodities in the world; yea, before life itself. This point Paul urgeth in sundry exhortations, saying, Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:12), forbidding us to preserve our outward peace by communication with idolaters. And again, Stand fast in the faith (1 Cor. 16:13). Yea, this is one main point that Paul urgeth to Timothy in both his epistles: to keep faith and a good conscience (1 Tim. 1:5,19). And our Saviour Christ in one of His parables (Matt. 13:44) compares the kingdom of heaven to a treasure hid in the field; which, when a man findeth, he hideth it, and goes home, and sells all he hath to buy the field. Whereby He would teach us that everyone's duty, who would enjoy the kingdom of heaven, is this: In regard of it, to forego and forsake all things else, esteeming them to be dross and dung, as Paul did (Phil 3:8). What though a man had all the riches and pleasures of the world, and all things else for this life that his heart could wish? Yet, if he want religion and a good conscience, all he hath is nothing; for so he wants the love and favour of God, and shall lose his soul; for the ransom whereof all the world can do nothing. Wherefore, we must hereby be

admonished to have more care to get and maintain true religion and a good conscience, than anything in the world besides.

Now, because nature will judge it a part of rashness to refuse life when it is offered; therefore, to prevent this conceit against these believers, the Holy Ghost sets down a notable reason of this their fact; to wit, They refused deliverance, that they might receive a better resurrection. Many interpreters understand these words of the resurrection at the day of judgment simply, as though the Holy Ghost had said, These martyrs therefore refused to be delivered from death because they looked to receive, at the day of judgment, a greater measure of glory; even for this, that in obedience to God, for the maintenance of true religion, they were content to lay down their lives. This (no doubt) is the truth of God, that the more we humble ourselves in suffering for the name of Christ in this life, the greater shall our glory be at the general resurrection; for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, causeth unto us a far more excellent and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17). And yet (as I take it) that is not the meaning of these words; but their resurrection at the last day is here termed better than the temporal deliverances offered unto them. For being in torments on the rack, they were but dead men; and when life was offered unto them, it was (as it were) a kind of resurrection, and in regard of the enemies of the church, a good resurrection; but for that they would not lose the comfort of resurrection to life at the last day.

Here then are two resurrections compared together. The first is a deliverance from temporal death; the second is a rising to life everlasting at the day of judgment. Now, of these two, the latter is the better; and that in the judgment of God's servants and martyrs. So then, the true meaning of these words is this: These servants of God refused deliverance from temporal tortures and punishments;

because their care and desire was that their bodies might rise again to life everlasting at the day of judgment; which rising again to life at that day, they judged far better than to rise to a temporal life for a while in this world.

This reason, well observed, may teach us these two special duties:

(1) First, to be careful above all things, for assurance in our consciences (as these servants of God had) that our bodies shall rise again to life everlasting at the last day. True it is we make this confession with our mouths among the articles of our faith; but we must labour to be settled and resolved effectually in our hearts that these our bodies (be they never so miserably tormented here) shall one day rise to life and glory by Jesus Christ. All the true martyrs of Christ knew and were resolved of this; and this it was, that made them so confident in their sufferings. And if we can attain unto it, we shall find great use hereof, both in life and death. For our lives, this will move us to embrace true religion from our hearts, and in all things to endeavour to keep a good conscience. This Paul testifieth (Acts 24:15,16), for having made profession of his hope in the resurrection, both of just and unjust, he saith, And herein I endeavour myself to have always a clear conscience, both towards God and towards men. And for death, this persuasion also is of great use: for it will notably stay the heart against the natural fear of death. It is a wonder to see how terrible the thoughts of death are to many a one. Now this fear ariseth hence, that they are not in heart resolved of their resurrection to life and glory at the last day; for if they were, they would endeavour themselves with patience and with comfort, to undergo the pangs thereof, though never so terrible.

(2) Secondly, hence we must learn so to lead this temporal life, that when we are dead, our bodies may rise again to life eternal. These

martyrs are a noble precedent herein unto us; for they are so resolute to hold that course of life which hath the hope of glory, that they will rather lose temporal life than leave that course. And indeed this duty is so necessary that unless we order well this temporal life, we can never have hope to rise to glory.

Question: How should we lead this temporal life that we may rise to glory after death? Answer: This St John teacheth us (Rev. 20:6), Blessed and holy is he that hath his part in the first resurrection; for on such the second death hath no power. We must therefore labour earnestly to have our part herein. The first resurrection is spiritual, wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost, causing him that is by nature dead in sin, to rise to newness of life; whereof whosoever is a true partaker, shall undoubtedly rise to glory. For they that are quickened in Christ from the death of sin, are made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:5,6). Natural death may sever soul and body for a time; but it can never hinder the motion of eternal life. Wherefore as we desire this life which is eternal when we are dead, so let us frame our natural lives to die unto sin while we are alive.

“And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented” Hebrews 11:36-37.

I. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment.

The second kind of suffering wherewith the servants of God were then tried is mocking. Touching the which we may observe divers points:

1. First, whence it came. No doubt it came from ungodly persons that were enemies to God’s church and true religion; for here it is made a part of the trial of God’s church by the enemies hereof.

Here then behold the state of mockers and scoffers at the servants of God; they are here accounted wicked wretches, and enemies to God and to His truth. So St Jude, speaking of certain false prophets which were crept into the church, calls them ungodly men (Jude 4), which he proves afterward by their black mouths in evil speaking (vv. 8,10). And Ishmael is accounted a persecutor by the Holy Ghost for mocking Isaac (Gal. 4:29). And David reckoning up the degrees of sinners, makes the chair of the scornful the third and highest (Psa. 1:1). All these places shew the heinousness of this sin; and therefore if any of us, young or old, high or low, have been overtaken with it heretofore, let us now repent and leave it; for it is odious in God’s sight. Thou that art a scoffer mayest flatter thyself and think all is well, let the matter prove how it can, words are but wind. But know

thy case is fearful; for as yet thou wantest the fear of God, and art an enemy to Christ and His religion, and one day thou shalt be judged, not only for thy wicked deeds, but for all thy cruel speakings (Jude 15).

2. Secondly, whereas these servants of God were tried by mockings, it shews that God's church in this world is subject to this affliction. It is not a thing newly begun in this age of ours, but hath always been in God's church from the beginning (Gen. 21:9), Ishmael mocked Isaac; and Isaiah brings in Christ complaining thus (Isa. 8:18): Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are as signs and wonders in Israel. And Jeremiah saith (Jer. 20:7), I am in derision daily; every one mocketh me. Yea, our Saviour Christ upon the cross, when he was working the blessed work of man's redemption, was even then mocked by the spiteful Jews (Matt. 27:41). And Paul was mocked of the Athenians for preaching Christ and the resurrection (Acts 17:18).

Now if this has been the estate of Christ our Head, and of His most worthy prophets and apostles, to be mocked and scorned; then must no child of God at this day think to escape; for if they have done this to the green tree, what will they do to the dry? Wherefore if we belong to Christ, we must prepare for it, and arm ourselves with patience to undergo this trial. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above the lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of the house (Matt. 10:24,25).

3. Thirdly, whereas these servants of God were tried by mockings, and did endure the same by faith; here we learn how to behave ourselves when we are subject to mocking and derision, especially for religion's sake. We must not return mock for mock and taunt for

taunt; but with meekness of heart learn to bear the same. When Christ was upon the cross, the Jews most shamefully mocked Him; yet even then did Christ pray for them. And the same was David's behaviour, as we read notably in Psalm 38:12-14. When his enemies spake evil of him, what did he? Did he rail on them again? No; He was as a deaf man, and heard not; and as a dumb man which openeth not his mouth; even as a man that heareth not; and in whose mouth are no reproofs. This was a rare thing in David, that he could thus bridle his affections in the case of reproach; but read the 15th verse and we shall see the cause: He trusted in the Lord his God; also he considered the hand of God in their reproaches (2 Sam. 16:10), and these things made him silent. This example we must look upon, and learn hereby with patience to possess our souls under reproach.

II-V. The third kind of suffering is scourging. They were not only mocked for religion, but also whipped and scourged. The fourth is bonds and imprisonment. The fifth is stoning (v.37), they were stoned. The sixth is this: They were sawn asunder. These were all worthy fruits of faith, being endured for religions' sake; but the particular points that might here be observed have been handled before, and therefore I pass them over.

VI. The seventh kind of suffering is this: They were tempted. These words, by the change of a letter in the original, may be read thus: They were burned. And some do so translate it; thinking that they that wrote or copied out this epistle at first, did put one letter for another. Their reason is because examples of grievous punishments are mentioned both before and after this; and therefore they think that this should be burning, which is a sore and grievous death. But we may safely and truly read the words thus: They were tempted; contriving hereby that they were enticed and allured by fair promises of life to forsake their religion. So the same word is used by St James,

saying (Jam. 1:14), Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own concupiscence and is enticed. If any ask why this trial in tempting should be placed among such cruel torments, I answer, because it is as great a trial as any can be. For it is as dangerous a temptation to overthrow religion and a good conscience as any punishment in the world. This appears plainly in Christ's temptations by the devil; for in those three, Satan bewrays his malice and craft against Christ and His church most notably. Now Satan, not prevailing with the two first, makes his third and last assault from the glory and dignity of the world; for shewing unto Christ all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, He saith, All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me (Matt. 4:9). Indeed Christ's holy heart would not yield unto it; but that it was a grievous temptation appears by Christ's answer. For in the former temptations, He only disputed with Satan out of Scripture; but when this temptation comes, Christ bids him (as it were in passion) Avoid Satan; signifying thereby not only His abhorring of that sin, but also the danger of that assault by the world. And indeed these temptations on the right hand (as we may call them) will most dangerously creep into the heart, and cause shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. All David's troubles and persecutions could not bring him to so grievous sins as did a little ease and rest. A huge great army cannot so soon give entrance to an enemy into a city, as riches and fair promises; neither can bodily torments so soon prevail against a good conscience, as will worldly pleasures and fair promises. In regard whereof, we must take heed that we be not deceived by the world; for the view of the glory and pomp thereof will sooner steal from a man both religion and a good conscience than any persecution can possibly do. And indeed, who do so oft change their religion when trials come, as they that have the world at will?

VII. The eighth example of suffering is this: They were slain with the sword. There can be nothing said of this which hath not been spoken in the former examples, and therefore I omit it.

VIII. The ninth and last example of suffering is this: They wandered up and down in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted and tormented; that is, being either banished, or constrained by flight to save their lives, they wandered up and down in base attire, and were destitute of ordinary food and comfort; and so in great affliction and torment.

1. Here we see these servants of God were driven from their own country, friends and families, by persecutions. Whence we observe that in time of persecution, a Christian man may lawfully flee for his safety, if he be not hindered by the bond of private or public calling. For these servants of God, here commended for their faith, did flee when they were persecuted; and that by faith; therefore the action is lawful, as I might prove at large, but that I have spoken of it heretofore. When our Saviour Christ knew that the Pharisees heard of the multitude of disciples which he made (John 4:1,3), He left Judea, where they had greatest jurisdiction, and came into Galilee for His safety. The prophets in the Old Testament did flee; as Elijah from Jezabel (1 Kin. 19:3). And so did the apostles in the New, and that by Christ's direction (Matt. 10:23).

Objection 1. But some will say, persecution is the hand of God, and therefore no man may flee from it; for so he should seem to flee from God Himself. Answer: We must consider persecution two ways: First, as it is the hand of God; secondly, as it is the work of the wicked enemies of God's church. For them God useth sometimes as instruments, in laying His hands upon His church, either for chastisement or for trial. Now a Christian being persecuted for the

truth, and having liberty to flee, cannot be said to flee from God's hand, unless he went away contrary to God's command, as Jonah did being sent to Nineveh; and besides, he knows that is impossible. But his intent is to flee from the wrath of his enemies to save his life for the further good of God's church. Again, the reason is not good to say that persecution is the hand of God, therefore a man may not flee from it. For so might a man conclude that none ought to flee from sickness, or from war; both which a man may do with a safe conscience, not being hindered by some special calling.

Objection 2. But everyone is bound to testify his faith and his religion before his enemies; and therefore may not flee in persecution. Answer: True indeed; a Christian man must so testify his faith, if he be called thereto of God; but if God give him liberty and opportunity to flee, then He will not have him at that time to justify his religion by that means.

Objection 3. But if it be lawful to flee, how then comes it to pass that some of God's children, when they might have fled, would not; but have stood to justify their profession unto death? Answer: We must judge reverently of them, and think they did it by some special instinct and motion of God's Spirit; as appeareth by their patience and constancy in their greatest torments. Examples hereof we have in our English Acts and Monuments, in men worthy of notable commendations for their constancy and zeal for the truth of the gospel.

Question: If flight in persecution may be an action of faith; why may not the minister of God's Word flee in persecution? Answer: There be some cases wherein the minister may lawfully flee: First, when that particular church and congregation over which he is placed, is dispersed by the enemies; so as he hath no hope to gather and call

them back again; then (no doubt) he may flee, till his congregation be gathered again. Secondly, if the persecutors do specially aim at the minister's life, then with the consent of his flock, he may go apart for his own safety for a time. So it was with Paul, when the Ephesians were in an uproar about their Diana. Paul in zeal would have entered in among them, but the disciples suffered him not (Acts 19:30). This they did for Paul's safety and the good of the church; for they knew those idolaters would have been most fierce against Paul. And so ought every particular church to have special care of the life of the minister. Other causes there be in which he may flee; but I will not stand to recite all, because there be so many circumstances which may alter the case, as well respecting his enemies as himself and his people; making that unlawful at one time, and to some persons, which to others, or at another time may be lawful.

2. Secondly, whereas it is said, These servants of God wandered up and down; we do learn that a man may lawfully go from place to place, and travel from country to country; if so be he goes in faith, as these men did. Again, their going was to keep faith and a good conscience; and for the same end may a man lawfully travel from place to place. But when men go not in faith, nor yet for this end, the better to keep a good conscience; then undoubtedly their travel is not lawful.

By this then we have just cause to reprove the bad course of many wanderers among us; as:

(1) First, of our common beggars, whose whole life is nothing else but a wandering from place to place; though not in faith nor for conscience's sake; but they find a sweetness in their idle kind of life; and therefore they wander, because they would not work. Now this their course (having no other ground but love of idleness, and

contempt of pains in a lawful calling) cannot but be greatly displeasing unto God; who enjoins that every man should walk in some lawful calling, and eat his own bread (2 Thess. 3:12). This they do not, and therefore the curse of God pursueth them; for generally they are given up to most horrible sins of injustice and uncleanness; they walk inordinately; for they range not themselves into any families, but live more like brute beasts than men; they are not members of any particular congregation, but excommunicate themselves from all churches; and so live as though there were no God, no Christ, nor true religion. And herein we may see God's hand more heavy upon them, that they take all their delight in that course of wandering, which in its own nature is a curse and a punishment.

(2) Secondly, we may here also justly reprove the course of some others among us, who will needs be travellers; not for religion's sake (for that were commendable if they had such need), nor yet by virtue of their calling (which were lawful), but only for this end, to see fashions and strange countries; and they refrain not from such places as Rome, Spain etc., wherein the cruel Inquisition will hardly suffer any to pass with safety of a good conscience. But shall we think that this their travel is commendable? No surely; for the end of lawful travel is the preservation of faith and a good conscience, or the bond of some lawful calling. Now these men travelling upon no such grounds, but only upon pleasure; how shall we think they will stand to the truth, when they thrust themselves into such needless danger and trial? The crazed consciences of many at their return shew sufficiently the badness of that course.

3. Further, note the state of these believers for their attire; it was of sheepskins and goatskins. The like may be observed in other famous prophets and servants of God; Elijah wore a garment of hair, and thereby was known (2 Kin. 1:8). And so did John Baptist (Matt. 3:4).

Yea, the false prophets went so arrayed, that they might the rather be respected of the people (Zech. 3:4). And our Saviour Christ saith, The false prophets shall come in sheep's clothing, like the true prophets; when as indeed they are ravening wolves (Matt. 7:15). Now the true prophets of God went thus basely attired, that not only by word and doctrine, but also in life and conversation, they might preach repentance unto the people. And indeed, every minister of the gospel ought to be a light unto his people both in life and doctrine; and he that preacheth well, and doth not live according to his doctrine, builds with the one hand and pulls down with the other. Now whereas these servants of God went up and down in such base attire as sheepskins and goatskins; it was for poverty's sake, being deprived of friends, goods, house and lands; and so destitute of provision for better attire.

In their example, we may note that God's servants and children may be brought to extreme poverty and necessity; so as they shall want ordinary food and raiment, and be fain to cover themselves with beast's skins. This was the poor state and condition of godly Lazarus. Yea, Christ Jesus, for our sakes did undergo a mean estate; for He had not place where to lay His head (Matt. 8:20); and at His death He had not so much ground of His own as might serve for a burial place; but was laid in Joseph's tomb, which is a great comfort to any child of God in like distress. For why should any be dismayed with that estate which Christ Jesus and His dearest servants have undergone for His example?

Here some may ask how this can stand with the saying of David, I have been young, and am old; yet I never saw the righteous forsaken, nor begging bread (Psa. 37:25). Answer: David's saying may be taken two ways: First, as his own observation in his time. For he saith not, The righteous is never forsaken, but that he never saw it; and indeed

it is a rare thing to see the righteous forsaken. Secondly (which I take to be David's meaning), the righteous man is never forsaken, and his seed too. For if God lay temporal chastisements on any of His servants, suffering them to want, yet He forsaketh not his seed after him; but reneweth His mercy towards them, if they walk in obedience before Him. He may make trial of godly parents by want, but their godly children shall surely be blessed; so that this hindereth not, but that the godly may be in want.

Further, whereas they are said to go up and down in sheepskins and goatskins, we must understand that they did it by faith. From whence we learn that when all temporal blessings fail, then the child of God must by faith lay hold upon God's gracious promises of life eternal, and stay himself thereon.

This point must be remembered carefully; for say we should want all kinds of temporal benefits, must we thereupon despair, and think that God hath forsaken us? God forbid; nay, when all means fail, and the whole world is against us, yet then we must lay hold upon the promise of life eternal in Christ, and thereupon rest our souls. Thus did these believers in this place. And this faith did Job notably testify, when God had taken from him children, goods, health, yea, and all that he had, yet then he said (Job 13:15), Though he kill me, yet will I trust in Him. And so must we endeavour to do, if that case befall us; for when all worldly helps and comforts fail us, this promise of life in Christ will be a sweet and safe refuge for our soul.

4. Being destitute, afflicted and tormented.

Here the apostle amplifieth their misery in their wandering estate, by three degrees of crosses which did accompany the same. First, they were destitute of temporal blessings; secondly, they were afflicted both in body and mind; thirdly, tormented, that is, evil entreated.

These are added for a special cause to shew that these servants of God were laden with afflictions; they were banished and driven to extreme poverty; they were deprived of all their goods, and of all society of men; they were afflicted in body and in mind, and evil entreated of all men; no man would do them good, but all men did them wrong; whereby we see that even waves of misery overwhelmed them on every side.

Hence we learn that God's servants may be overwhelmed with manifold calamities at the same instant, being pressed down with crosses in goods, in body, mind, friends, and every way. This was Job's case, a most worthy servant of God; he was afflicted in body, in friends, goods and children, and (which was greatest of all) he wrestled in conscience with the wrath of God (Job 13:26), Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth. And the like hath been the estate of many of God's children (Psa. 88:3,7), My soul is filled with evils; thou hast vexed me with all thy ways, etc.

Question: How can this stand with the truth of God's Word, wherein are promises of all manner of blessings both temporal and spiritual to those that fear Him (Deut. 28:1,2 etc.), If thou obey the voice of the Lord thy God, all these blessings shall come upon thee and overtake thee; blessings in the city and in the field; in the fruit of thy body, and of thy ground and cattle. (Psa. 34:10), They that seek the Lord shall lack nothing that is good. For godliness hath the promise of this life, and of the life to come (1 Tim. 4:8). And therefore David compareth the godly man to the tree that is planted by the water's side, which bringeth forth much fruit, and is green and well liking (Psa. 1:3). How then comes this to pass that God's own servants should be thus oppressed and laden not with one calamity or two, but with sundry and grievous afflictions at the same time? Answer:

True it is the Scripture is full of gracious promises of temporal blessings unto God's children; but they are conditional, and must be understood with an exception to this effect: God's children shall have such and such blessings, unless it please God by afflictions to make trial of His graces in them, or to chastise them for some sin; so that the exception of the cross for the trial of grace, or chastisement for sin, must be applied to all promises of temporal blessings. And hence it comes to pass that the most worthy and renowned servants of God for their faith, are said to be afflicted and in misery. For His promises of temporal blessings are not absolute but conditional. All things are theirs (as Paul saith, 1 Cor. 3:21), and they shall have honour, favour etc. unless it please God to prove their faith, or to chastise their sins by crosses and afflictions.

Question: How can God's servants be able to bear so many and grievous crosses at once, seeing it is hard for a man to bear one cross patiently? The answer is here laid down, to wit, by faith; for many and grievous were the miseries that lay on these servants of God; and yet by believing the promise of life in the Messiah, they were enabled to hear them all. This is a sovereign remedy against immoderate grief in the greatest distress; and undoubtedly the floods of affliction shall never overwhelm him that hath his heart assured by faith of the mercy of God toward him by Jesus Christ. This made David say (Psa. 23:4), He would not fear evil, though he should walk through the valley of the shadow of death. And Paul speaking of tribulation, anguish, famine, persecution, yea, and death itself, saith, In all these we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us (Rom. 8:37). And from this faith it was that he was able to endure all estates, to be hungry, to want, etc. (Phil. 4:12,13).

If this be true, that God's children may be afflicted with manifold calamities at once, then the opinion of natural and ungodly men is

false, who judge him and think him to be wicked and ungodly, whom God ladeth with manifold calamities. This was the judgement of Job's three friends, and the ground of all their disputation against him; that because God had laid so many crosses upon him, therefore he was but an hypocrite. And this is the rash judgment of natural men in our days, especially upon those that make profession of religion; when God's hand of trial or correction lies upon them, they presently censure them for hypocrites; but this is a wretched opinion; for God's dearest children may be pressed down with manifold calamities.

Secondly, seeing faith in Christ will support the soul under manifold crosses; be they never so grievous; we must labour in the fear of God, to have our hearts rooted and grounded in this faith; and when afflictions come, we must strive to shew forth the fruit and power of it by bearing them patiently.

And thus much of the several branches of affliction, in this last example of believers.

“(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:38-40.

(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (v.38)

In these words the Holy Ghost doth answer to a secret objection or surmise, which a natural man might conceive against the believers spoken of before. For it being said that they wandered up and down; some man might think thus: No marvel though they wandered up and down; for it may be they were not worthy to live in the world. This the Holy Ghost doth flatly deny, and avoucheth the clean contrary of them; to wit, that they wandered up and down by faith; and the Lord caused them so to do, because the world was not worthy of them, they were too good to live in the world.

In this answer to this surmise, we may observe what is the opinion of natural men concerning the children of God; to wit, that they are not worthy to live in the world, but the earth whereon they tread is too good for them. This hath been, is, and will be the world’s estimation of God’s children (Matt. 24:9), Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. (John 16:2), They shall excommunicate you; yea, the time shall come that whosoever killeth you shall think he doth God service. (Acts 22:22), Away (say the Jews to Paul), with such a fellow from the earth; it is not meet that he should live. And hence he saith of himself and the other apostles (1 Cor. 4:13), They were made the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things.

In the time of the persecuting emperors in the primitive church, when any common calamity befell the people or state; as famine, death, pestilence or such like, they straightway imputed it to the Christians, saying that they and their wicked religion were the cause thereof. And though we have religion maintained among us, yet the poor servants of God find the like welcome in the world; for thus the wicked censure them everywhere, saying that they are dissembling hypocrites, and none so bad and vile persons as they are. Now if any man ask, how comes it to pass that the world should slander them so, and think so vilely of them? Answer: First, because they be taken out of the world, in regard of state and condition in grace (John 15:19), therefore the world hateth them. Secondly, the world knowest them not (1 John 3:1), and therefore speaks evil of them (Jude 10). Thirdly, the wicked measure others by themselves, and therefore despise the godly that join not with them (1 Pet. 4:3,4). Lastly, there is a secret enmity between the seed of the wicked and the seed of the church (1 John 3:12). The wicked are of the evil one, the devil; and therefore must needs hate the godly who are born of God. So that when we shall see or hear that ungodly persons shall in any such sort abuse the children of God; we must not marvel nor be troubled at it, for it is no new thing, it hath been from the beginning; but we must pray that God would open their eyes that they may turn from their sins to repentance; and then (no doubt) they will change their conceit, and alter their behaviour towards them; as Paul did (Gal. 1:13,15; Acts 9:1,26).

To come to the words more particularly, the Holy Ghost saith, The world was not worthy of them; that is, the company of ungodly livers, without Christ, and void of grace, were not worthy of the society of these holy ones; and for this cause did the Lord take them from among them.

Here note a singular fruit of true faith: It brings man to that estate, and gives him that excellency, that he is more worth than the whole world. I mean by the whole world, the estate of all those that live in the world out of Christ. If then a man would have true and stable dignity, let him labour for true faith; for faith hath this privilege, to advance a believer to true honour and excellency. And therefore our Saviour saith, As many as receive Him by faith, to them he gave power, or prerogative, to be the sons of God (John 1:12). We take it for a great prerogative to be the child of an earthly prince, and so it is; but to be the son of God (who is King of Kings) is a pre-eminence and dignity above all dignities; and no tongue can express the excellency thereof. For what more can a man desire than to be heir of glory in life everlasting? And yet true faith bringeth this to a believer. It is an excellent dignity to be matched with angels; and no prince in the world, by all human wit or power, can attain unto it; but yet the child of God can, being joined to God by faith in Christ; whereby (in some sort) he is above the angels themselves; for our nature in Christ is advanced above the nature of angels.

Honours and dignity in politick or civil estates are the good gifts of God, and His own ordinances, whereby men are in higher places, and in account one above another; but yet all the dignity, honour and pomp of the world, severed from that dignity which faith bringeth to the believer is nothing worth. Indeed, if worldly pre-eminence be joined with faith, it is a great and excellent prerogative; for faith makes it acceptable unto God; but sever faith from worldly dignities, and what are they but vanity of vanities? Which will turn to the greater condemnation of him that enjoineth them. If a man have favour in the court, and yet want the king's favour, it is nothing; and such are all temporal dignities without God's favour; for at His indignation they vanish away. Now His favour without faith can no man have; for he that cometh unto God must believe (v.6).

Again; the Holy Ghost saith, The world was not worthy of these men, for another cause; and that is this: Every Christian man by his faith brings many blessings among those parties, and to that place where he lived; now the world deserves no such blessings, and therefore is unworthy of the persons by whom they come.

Question: How do Christians bring blessings to places where they live? Answer: First, by their presence; for as God said to Abraham the father of the faithful, Thou shalt be a blessing (Gen. 12:3), so it is with all believers. Laban confessed that he perceived that the Lord had blessed him for Jacob's sake (Gen. 30:27). And Potiphar saw that Joseph was a blessing in his house, for the Lord made all that he did to prosper (Gen. 39:2,3). While Lot was in Sodom, the angel could not destroy it (Gen. 19:22). And if there had been ten believers in Sodom, the Lord would have spared all for ten's sake (Gen. 18:32). Now, bringing good things, and keeping back God's judgments by their presence, they are thereby blessings. Secondly, they are blessed by their prayers. Abraham prayed for Abimelech (Gen. 20:17,18), and God healed him and his family of barrenness. At Moses' prayer, God's judgments were taken from Egypt (Exod. 7:12,13, 30), and His wrath appeased towards His people (Exod. 32:11,14). And some think that Stephen's prayer at his death for his persecutors, was one means for mercy unto Saul, that then consented to his death (Acts 7:60, 8:1). Thirdly, they bring blessings upon a place by their example; for when men shall see godly persons walking before them in the fear of God, and making conscience of all manner of sin, it is a special means to cause others to turn from their wicked ways to newness of life. And therefore Peter exhorts the Christians to have their conversation honest among the Gentiles; that they which speak evil of them, as of evil doers, might by their good works which they shall see, glorify God in the day of their visitation (1 Pet. 2:12). And he bids godly wives so walk that their husbands may be won without the

Word, by beholding their pure conversation which is with fear (1 Pet. 3:1,2). And Paul bids the Phillippians to walk blameless in the middle of a wicked and crooked nation, as lights in the middle of the world (Phil. 2:15), that those which were to be converted by their good conversation might be won to the truth. God sent a flood upon the world for the grievousness of men's sins. Now why doth He not send more floods? Are men now as wicked as they were then? Yes undoubtedly, man for his part deserves it now as well as they did then; and therefore our Saviour Christ saith, As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of man (Matt. 24:37); so that every day we deserve a new flood; but yet the Lord stayeth the execution of His judgments for a time, that His elect may be gathered and converted. And as soon as that is done, heaven and earth shall go together, and God will not stay one moment for all the world besides. So that every nation and people in the world have benefit by God's children, because for their sakes doth the Lord stay His wrath and defer His judgments, even the great judgment of fire, wherewith the world shall be consumed at the last day. These things the world should take notice of, as well to move them to repentance of their sins, whereby they are made unworthy in the presence of a godly man, as also to persuade them to a better behaviour and carriage towards the godly, by whom they are so many ways blessed.

The Holy Ghost addeth, that wandered in wildernesses, and mountains, and dens, and caves of the earth. These were desolate places, and not inhabited; and yet for the wickedness of the world, God will have these believers here to wander. We must not think that they betook themselves voluntarily to this solitary life, but only upon necessity, being constrained by persecution to fly into the wilderness for the saving of their lives, and the keeping of a good conscience.

This serves to descry unto us the blind error of many ages before us, wherein it hath been thought, as it is by papists at this day, to be a state of perfection to live a monk or hermit out of all societies in some desert place, and there to spend their whole life in contemplation only, and that voluntarily; and they magnify this estate so much, that hereby they think to merit eternal life at the hands of God. But these believers did neither voluntarily, nor with opinion of merit, betake themselves to this solitary life, but of necessity. And indeed this kind of life hath no warrant in God's Word; for every Christian is a member of two kingdoms: of Christ's kingdom of grace, and of that particular state where he dwelleth; and by reason hereof, hath a twofold calling; a temporal and a spiritual calling. In both of which he must walk diligently so long as he can, doing the duties both of a child of God, and of a member of that commonwealth where he liveth. Now when a man goeth voluntarily to lead a solitary life, he forsaketh his temporal calling altogether, and perform the other but negligently; for he withdraws himself from many duties of piety, whereby the people might be furthered to Godward; which none can do with a good conscience.

Further, observe the places where they are constrained to wander, to wit, in wildernesses, caves and dens; places where wild beasts have abode and recourse; and yet here they live, whenas men will not suffer them to live among them. Where note that many times more mercy may be found among wild and savage beasts than with some men; so merciless are the wicked when God forsakes them, and leaves them to themselves. The lions entreat Daniel better than Darius's courtiers and servants do (Dan. 6). And Lazarus finds more kindness with the dogs at Dives' gates than with him and all his family besides (Luke 16:21). The consideration whereof must teach us to nip sin in the head at the beginning, and not to suffer it to grow; for if it get ahead and reign in us, it will make us worse than brute or

savage beasts, and cruel as the devil himself; as we may see in the world's usage of these believers.

Thus we see the state of true believers under many and grievous miseries, which we must well observe, to arm ourselves against the times of adversities which God may send upon us. We must not judge it a cursed estate to be under the cross; for here we see that the faith of His servants is commended for suffering nine several kinds of miseries. If we shall think that these were but a few; we must know that in them the Holy Ghost setteth down the state of His church unto the end; for these things were written for ensamples unto us. And therefore if calamities come, and such miseries befall us as do drive us towards distrust, as though God had forsaken us, we must remember that God did not forsake these His children in their calamities, and therefore also will not forsake us. And thus much for this last example.

“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:” (v.39).

The Holy Ghost, having set down at large a worthy and notable catalogue of examples of faith in sundry believers that lived from the beginning of the world to the time of the Maccabees, doth now for a further commendation of their faith, rehearse the same things that before he had said in the 2nd and 13th verses of this chapter. In saying that by faith they all received good report, his meaning is that they did believe in the true Messiah, and looked for salvation in Him alone; whereupon they were approved of God Himself, who gave testimony hereof, partly by His Word, and partly by His Spirit in their consciences, and partly by His church; by all which they were commended and assured to be God's servants. And yet notwithstanding this good report, they received not the promise; that

is, the promise of Christ's incarnation and their days. They received Christ truly by faith, and so saw His day; but His actual incarnation in the flesh they lived not to see.

Whereas it is said that by faith they obtained testimony:

1. Here, first observe that there is nothing in man that makes him acceptable to God but faith only. God regards no man's person; He accepts not of a man because he is a king, or because he is wise, or rich, or strong, etc., but if a man believe, then the Lord is ready to give testimony of him, that He like well of him. In regard whereof, we must all labour diligently above all other things to get true faith in Christ, that so we may have approbation at God's hands; without which there is no salvation to be hoped for.

2. Secondly, here also learn the right way to get testimony, approbation and credit with men; a thing whereof many are exceeding glad; and which the child of God must not contemn. Now the way is this: He must first labour to get approbation at God's hands; which, indeed he cannot do any other way save only by a true and lively faith, as we have heard before. Now the Lord approving of him, He that hath the hearts of all men in His hands, inclining them whither He will; and if it stand with His glory, He will cause them to like and to speak well of him that doth believe. Many indeed get great applause in the world, which little regard true faith; but in the end, this their glory and applause will be their shame; for they that honour me will I honour, saith the Lord, but he that despiseth me shall be despised (1 Sam. 2:30).

3. Lastly, whereas the Holy Ghost saith that all these worthy men obtained testimony of God, and yet received not the promise, we are hereby taught that we which now live in the church are much more bound in conscience to believe, than they which lived in the Old

Testament. For we have received the promise of Christ's incarnation. They received it not, and yet believed. Wherefore in the fear of God, let us labour for true faith. But some will say, Why should we hear so much of faith? We do all believe. Answer: Indeed we say so with our mouths; but it is a rare thing to find true and sound faith in the heart; for gross and palpable ignorance abounds everywhere, and yet men will needs be good believers, which is a thing impossible; for how should faith be without knowledge? And as men are ignorant, so they have no care to learn nor to get knowledge, that so they might come by true faith. Their hearts are wholly taken up with the world for matters of profit and delight; that they can spare no time to seek for this precious gift of faith. Again, many have knowledge with whom true faith is rare; for faith purifies the heart, it is joined with a good conscience, and shews itself by obedience through love. Now (to leave the heart to God), where almost is the man that walks answerably to his knowledge? May we not truly say of many, that as the Word cometh in at the one ear, it goeth out at the other? And among those which learn and bear away something, there is little care to practice it in life.

But we must know that if we would be approved of God, we must believe. Now so long as we remain ignorant, or else having knowledge do not join practice therewith, in obedience from a good conscience; undoubtedly we have no spark of true faith in us. We may make a shew of faith, and so bear the world in hand that we believe; but certainly this will prove a very dead faith; and in the end, and finishing of all, appear to be nothing but bare lip-faith, and mere presumption. Now, to conclude this point, we must know that unless we get true faith, as these believers had (which we must shew by good fruits, as they did), even they shall rise up in judgment against us to condemn us at the last day. For they believed, though they had not the ground of faith so laid before them as we have. Wherefore let

them that want knowledge, labour for it; and they which have it, let them join obedience with their knowledge, that the faith of their hearts may be seen by the fruits of their lives; for true faith cannot be hid, but will break out in good works.

“God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” (v.40)

Because some man might much marvel that such men as received testimony of God for their faith, should not yet receive the promise; therefore here the Holy Ghost renders a reason thereof: the good pleasure of God, appointing that Christ should be incarnate at such a time as was most convenient for the perfect consummation of the whole church, consisting of Gentiles as well as Jews. For though these ancient believers were in time long before; yet God provided Christ’s incarnation so fitly for us, that they without us should not have perfect consummation in glory.

The Exposition.

God providing a better thing for us.

The word in the original translated providing, signifieth properly foreseeing; wherein is likewise included God’s decree and ordination. Now, this we must know: that it is a peculiar prerogative belonging to the true God alone, to be able to foresee things to come; and that many thousands of years before; no creature of himself can do it. And yet it is true that this property to foresee is ascribed unto God, not properly, but in regard of our capacity; for if we speak of God properly, God cannot be said to foresee anything, because all things are present to Him, whether past or to come.

The prescience, or foreknowledge in God, puts a difference between the true God and all creatures; for the true God foresees all things that are to come; so can no creature do. Indeed, some creatures foresee and foretell some things; yet herein they come short of the divine property; for God foresees all things by Himself, without signs and outward means. But creatures only foresee some things not of themselves, but by means of signs and outward causes, or by revelation from God; otherwise no creature can foresee things to come.

Now as we said before, this foresight in God includes His decree and ordination; for therefore did these things so come to pass because God ordained them. Whereby we see that God's prescience or foreknowledge is not idle, but operative and joined with His will; (Matt. 10:29,30), an hair cannot fall from our head nor a sparrow light upon the ground without His will. As all things in time come to pass, so God before all worlds willed, that is, decreed and appointed them. And under this large extent of God's will or decree, we must include the sinful actions of men; for God doth not barely foresee them, but decree the being of them, and so will them after a sort, though not to be done by Himself, yet by others. When Judas betrayed Christ, and Pilate with the wicked Jews condemned and reviled Him, they sinned grievously; and yet herein they did nothing but that which God's hand and counsel had determined before to be done (Acts 4:28).

This point well considered confutes their opinion who indeed enlarge God's prescience or foreknowledge over all things good and evil; but yet exclude sin from without the compass of His decree and ordination. But here we see God's foresight includes His decree; and nothing comes to pass simply without His will; howsoever many things be done against His revealed will, yet without His absolute

will can nothing come to pass. He worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11); doing Himself those things that be good, and willingly permitting evil to be done by others for good ends.

But what did God here provide and foresee for us? Answer: A better thing; that is, God in His eternal counsel provided a better estate for His church in the New Testament than He did for believers in the Old.

Hence we learn that as God hath His general providence whereby He governeth all things; so also He hath His special and particular providence whereby in all things He provides and brings to pass that which is best for His church. For in the Old Testament God provided that for His church which was meet for it. But considering that the church in the New Testament (in some respects) was to have a better estate than the church in the Old Testament had; therefore He provides for a better estate. And look, as in His eternal wisdom He foreseeth what is best for all estates and times; so in His providence doth He accomplish and effect the sin.

For us.

That is, for the church in the New Testament; where note that God's church, and the state thereof in the New Testament, is better than it was in the Old, before the coming of Christ. The Holy Ghost here speaks this plainly, and therefore we need no further proof thereof.

Question: How should it be better with the church now, than it was then? Answer: True it is that God gave the Covenant of grace in the beginning to our first parents in Paradise; the sum whereof was this: The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). And this Covenant did God renew and revive unto His church from

time to time, in all ages, unto this day. Both circumcision and the Passover were seals of this Covenant, as well as our sacraments are; so that in substance they differ not; the free gift of grace in Christ belonged to them as well as to us. The believing Jews in their sacraments did eat the same spiritual meat, and drink the same spiritual drink with us (as the apostle witnesseth, 1 Cor. 10:3,4), and believers then obtained the same eternal life that we now do by faith. And yet if we regard the manner of administering the Covenant of grace in God's church unto the people of God; herein doth the church of the New Testament far surpass the church of God in the Old; and indeed herein consists the pre-eminence of the church under the gospel; which stands in five things especially:

1. First, in the Old Testament, spiritual and heavenly were propounded unto the church under temporal and earthly blessings. This is plain by God's dealing with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; for the Lord promised unto them the temporal blessings of the land of Canaan; under which He signified the gift of life everlasting in the kingdom of heaven. But in the New Testament, life everlasting is plainly promised to the believer without any such type or figure.

2. Secondly, in the Old Testament, Christ was shewed and signified unto them in ceremonies, rites and types, which were in number many, and in signification some of them dark and obscure; but now these types and ceremonies are abolished, the shadow is gone, and the substance come; and instead of dark signs and figures, we have two most plain and sensible sacraments. More plainly, the Covenant of grace in the Old Testament was sealed by the blood of lambs, as signs of the blood of Christ; but now to His church in the New Testament, Christ Himself hath sealed His Testament by His own blood.

3. Thirdly, in the Old Testament all the knowledge they had was in the law; and their understanding in the gospel was obscure and very slender; but in the New Testament, not only the law is made manifest, but also the supernatural knowledge of the gospel.

4. Fourthly, the law was only committed and published to one nation and people; but the gospel is spread and preached to all the world.

5. And lastly, the church in the Old Testament believed in Christ to come; but now the church believes in Christ which is already come and exhibited; in all which respects, the church in the New Testament doth exceed the church of the Old.

Now, whereas the text saith, God provided a better thing for us, we must not understand it of all these prerogatives, but only of the fifth and last, touching the actual exhibiting of Christ in the flesh; as Christ also imports (Luke 10:23,24), Blessed are the eyes which see that ye see; for I tell you, many prophets and kings have desired to see those things that ye see, and have not seen them; which things we must understand of the incarnation of Christ. And that this is such a prerogative to the New Testament appeareth by old Simeon, who, when he had seen Christ in the temple, as it was promised him, sang unto God this song (Luke 2:29,30), Lord, now lettest thy servant depart in peace according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation; as if he should say, I have now Lord lived long enough, let me now depart in peace, seeing now I have seen thy Christ my Saviour (where we see he makes it a matter of full contentment unto his soul) which the believers under the law saw not.

Hence we must learn our duty; for if our state be now better than the state of the Old Testament was, and if we enjoy privileges denied to God's ancient servants before and under the law; then undoubtedly we ought to strive to go before them in grace and obedience; for

every man's account shall be according to his receipts. He that receives five talents, must make account to return more than he that receives two; where God is more abundant in His mercy, there He looks for answerable thankfulness and obedience. We go beyond the ancient church in five things; and therefore we must stir up our hearts to be answerable in grace and obedience going beyond them. But if for all this, we come short of them in these things, then surely our case is fearful, and our punishment shall be greater; for they that had less prerogative shall be witnesses against us, if they go beyond us in obedience.

That they without us might not be made perfect.

That is, might not be fully glorified. Here is the reason why Christ was not exhibited in their days. Indeed all true believers before Christ were justified and sanctified, and in soul received to glory before us; but we must all be perfected together. Now His will herein He bringeth thus to pass. All must be perfected in Christ. But He will not have Christ to come and suffer till the fulness of time came, in these last days (Heb. 1:2) (as the apostle speaketh), that the believers living in these days might have time of being in the church to be called, justified and sanctified; and so they might be glorified with them that lived before. For put the case that Christ had suffered in the days of Abraham or David, or thereabout; then the end of the world must needs have come the sooner; for so it was foretold that Christ should come in the latter ages of the world (1 Pet. 1:20). Now if the world had been sooner cut off, then had there not been time of birth and calling for all the elect that now live and shall live; therefore for their sakes was Christ's coming deferred till the fulness of time. And this I take to be the meaning of the words.

Now in that the Holy Ghost here saith, The members of Christ in the New Testament must be perfected with all the ancient believers in the Old; we must hereby be admonished to conform ourselves unto these ancient fathers in the participation of grace and practice of obedience in this life. For how can we look to be glorified with them after this life, if here we be not like them in grace? Christ tells His followers (Matt. 8:11,12) that many should come from the east and from the west to sit with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (because they were followers of these patriarchs in the faith) when as the children of the kingdom, that is many Jews by birth, born in the church, should be cast into utter darkness. Now, if Christ deny to glorify the children and posterity of these ancient believers because they did not follow them in grace and in obedience; how can we which are by nature sinners of the Gentiles look to be glorified with them, unless in grace and obedience we conform ourselves unto them?

Thus much for these examples of faith; now something must be added out of the next chapter; because the Holy Ghost makes use of all these worthy examples.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” Hebrews 12:1.

In these words, the Holy Ghost propoundeth a worthy exhortation to the Christians of the New Testament; that they should labour to be constant in the profession of the faith; that is, in holding, embracing and believing true Christian religion. And His reason is framed thus: The saints of God in the Old Testament were constant in the faith; and therefore you must likewise be constant in the faith that live in the New Testament. The first part of the reason is laid down in all the examples of the former chapter. The conclusion or sequel is contained in this first verse. Wherein we may observe two points: I. an exhortation unto constancy in true religion; and II. the way or means to attain thereunto. The exhortation is inferred upon the former examples; which are all here applied as precedents and directions unto us, for constancy and perseverance in the faith; in these words, Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses; that is, seeing Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the rest of the holy fathers, who are a cloud of witnesses unto us (that is, lights and leaders before us), were constant in true religion (whether we respect their faith in God’s promises, or obedience to His commandments), therefore we also must be constant in the faith. The way or means hereunto stands in three duties in the words following; Let us cast away etc.

I. For the exhortation: First, in general, the very inferring of it from the former examples teacheth us this special duty: That everyone in God’s church must apply unto himself those instructions that are laid

down, either generally in doctrine, or particularly in example. And therefore the Holy Ghost here saith not, Let the Galatians or the Corinthians (which were two renowned churches) be constant in the faith; but, Let us, that is, you Hebrews with myself, be constant in the faith, following the example of your ancient fathers. It is said of the ancient Jews that many of them heard God's word; but it was not profitable unto them, because it was not mingled with faith in them (Heb. 4:2). What is it to mingle the Word with faith? It is not only to receive it by faith, believing it to be true; but also by the same hand of faith, to apply it to a man's own soul, to his heart and life. And undoubtedly, God's Word thus applied to a man's particular person, hath in it great power and fruit; whether we regard information of judgment or reformation of life. But it is a hard thing to do, and rare to find a man that doth sincerely apply unto himself, either general doctrines, or particular examples. We are all prone to shift it from ourselves and lay it upon others, saying, This is a good item, or a good lesson, for such an one and such an one, if he were here, or if he would mark it. In the meanwhile, what benefit do we reap to our own souls? For the Word not applied to ourselves doth us no good; it is like physick not taken, or food not eaten. And hence it comes to pass that though we hear much, yet we profit little by the ministry of God's Word. We must therefore learn to follow Mary's example who pondered Christ's words, and laid them up in her own heart. When an exhortation is given, we must not post it off and lay it upon other men's shoulders; but apply it to ourselves, and lay it to our own hearts, saying, This instruction is for me. Hereby (no doubt) we should feel greater blessings upon the preaching of the Word than yet we do. And to move us hereunto, let us consider that Satan our utter enemy (who seeks nothing but our destruction) is most bade to hinder this application of the Word, either by the minister, or by a man's own conscience. As for example: when the minister (by occasion out of God's Word) shall confute either error in judgment or

misdemeanour in life; then, men that hear, and are guilty thereof, should say, This is mine error, or my fault; now I am confuted or reproved. And God (no doubt) if men would thus do, woud make it effectual unto them at the length. But instead of this applying to ourselves (either through our own corruption, or Satan's suggestions or both), we shift it from ourselves, and say, Now he reproveth such an one, and such an one; and speaks against such and such; and indeed Satan (by his good will) would never have a man apply the Word rightly to himself. Therefore, seeing Satan is so busy, and this is his deceit, to make a man shift off an exhortation or reproof from himself and to lay it on others; we must be as careful to apply it to ourselves, and lay it to our consciences; and then (no doubt) we shall find it to be a word of power, able to reform both the misdemeanour of our lives, and the errors of our minds.

Now to the reason more particularly. We must be constant in the faith, because we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. Here, the ancient fathers of the Old Testament, which in the former chapter were commended unto us for their faith, are compared to a cloud, and then to a cloud compassing us, and lastly to a cloud of witnesses.

1. They are compared to a cloud (as I take it) by allusion to the cloud which directed and led the Israelites in the wilderness. For when they came from Egypt, and were forty years in the desert of Arabia; all that while they were directed by a pillar of cloud by day (Exod. 13:21). Now, look as that cloud guided the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt to the land of Canaan; so doth this company of famous believers direct all the true members of God's church in the New Testament, the right way from the kingdom of darkness to the spiritual Canaan kingdom of heaven. And this is the true cause why these worthy believers are compared to a cloud.

2. Mark further, they are called a cloud; but what a cloud? Namely, one compassing us. A compassing cloud they are called, by reason of the great company of believers; so as which way soever a man turns himself, he shall see believers on every side; and they are said to compass us, because they give us direction in the course of Christianity, as the cloud did the Israelites in the wilderness.

Now whereas the whole company of believers is called a cloud compassing us; here is answered a common objection of temporisers, which argue thus against religion: There are so many kinds of religion nowadays, that no man can tell which to be of; and therefore it is good to be of no religion, till we be certified which is the true religion. This carnal reason is here answered; for howsoever in some things there be variety of opinions in God's church, yet for the substance of religion all agree in one. For the company of believers in this world, resembles a cloud that goes before us, shewing us the right way which we are to walk in, to the kingdom of heaven. Secondly, in that these ancient believers are called a cloud compassing us, we are taught that as the Israelites did follow the cloud in the wilderness from the land of Egypt to Canaan; so must we follow the examples of these ancient believing fathers and prophets, to the kingdom of heaven. It is a strange thing to see how the Israelites followed that cloud. They never went till it went before them; and when it stood still, they stood still also, though it were two years together; and when it began to move, they moved with it. So in the same manner must we set before our eyes for a pattern of life, the worthy examples of believers in the Old Testament; for whatsoever was written, was written for our learning (Rom. 15:4). We must therefore be followers of them in faith, obedience and other graces of God; and so shall we be directed to life everlasting in the spiritual Canaan, the kingdom of heaven. And yet we must not follow them absolutely. For all of them had their infirmities, and some of them

had their grievous faults whereby they are tainted, and their commendation somewhat blemished; but we must follow them in the practice of faith and other graces of God. The cloud that guided the Israelites had two parts; a light part and a dark. The Egyptians, who were enemies to God's people, had not the light part before them, but the dark part; and so following that, they rushed into the Red Sea and were drowned; whereas the Israelites following the light part, went through in safety. Even so, these believers had in them two things: their sins, which be their dark part, which if we follow we cast our souls into great danger and destruction; and faith with other graces of God, which are their light part, which we must follow as our light; which if we do carefully, it will bring us safely to the kingdom of heaven. So Paul bids the Corinthians, be followers of me (1 Cor. 4:16), yet not absolutely in everything, but as he followed Christ. And so must we follow the fathers, as they went on in faith in Christ.

3. Further, they are a cloud of witnesses; that is, a huge multitude of witnesses. And they are so called, first, because by their own blood they confirmed the faith which they professed. Secondly, because they did all confirm the doctrine of true religion whereof they were witnesses, partly by speeches, and partly by actions in life and conversation. And so is every member of Christ a witness; as the Lord often calls the believing Israelites, His witnesses. Question: How came this to pass, that these believers should be God's witnesses? Answer: Surely because they testified the truth and excellency of God's holy religion, both in word and action, in life and conversation.

Now, seeing these in the Old Testament were Christ's witnesses:

(1) First, hereby all ignorant persons must be stirred up to be careful to get faith, and to learn true religion. If anything will move a man to

become religious, this will; for out of all the world, God will choose faithful men to be His witnesses, to testify His religion to others. If a man were persuaded that some worthy mighty prince would vouchsafe to call him to bear witness of the truth on his side, he would be wonderful glad thereof, and take it for a great honour to him. How much more then ought we to labour for knowledge, faith and obedience in true religion, that we may become witnesses unto the Lord our God? If it be a dignity to be witness to an earthly prince; oh then what a great prerogative is this, for a silly sinful man to become a witness to the truth of the everlasting God, who is King of Kings, and whose word needs no confirmation? This must make us all to labour for knowledge, and for faith, and for the power of religion. But if we will remain still in our ignorance, and never labour for knowledge, then shall these servants of God that believed in the Old Testament stand up and witness against us at the day of judgment; for they had not such means as we have, and yet they became most faithful witnesses.

(2) Secondly, this must teach us to be careful; that as in word we profess Christ, so in deed we may confess Him, expressing the power of His grace in us. For by this true confession of Christ, we are made His witnesses; but when we confess Christ in word only, and yet in life and practice deny Him, then we are unfaithful witnesses; for we say and unsay. In an earthly court, if a man should one while say one thing, and another while another thing, he would not be accepted for a witness, but rather be excepted against, as altogether unworthy; and so would prove a discredit to his friend's cause, and a shame to himself. So it is with us in Christ's cause; if we profess in word and deny in deed, we discredit Christ and His profession, and shame ourselves for ever. And therefore we must be careful not only in word and judgment, but in life and conversation, to make a true and

constant confession of Christ and of His truth. And thus much for this exhortation.

II. Now followeth the second point to be observed in this verse; namely, the manner how God's church and people may put in practice this worthy exhortation of the Holy Ghost, to be constant in the faith. And this consists in three duties: 1. They must cast away that which presseth down. 2. They must cast away that sin that hangeth so fast on; or, sin which so readily doth compass us about. 3. They must run the race that is set before them with patience. Whosoever in God's church, either Jew or Gentile, can perform these three things, shall be able no doubt to follow the counsel of the Holy Ghost, and continue constant in the faith to the end. Of these three in order.

1. The first thing then to be done is this: We must cast away that which presseth down; or thus, Cast away the weight, or burden (for so much the word in the original signifieth), even that burden which so presseth down the poor Christian that he cannot go on forward in the course of godliness and Christianity. By burden, or weight, here we must understand five things: First, the love of temporal life; secondly, care for earthly things; thirdly, riches and temporal wealth; fourthly, worldly honour and preferments; fifthly, worldly delights and pleasures. All these are things which lie heavy on man's soul, as weighty burdens that press it down, especially then when the soul should lift up itself to seek heavenly things. So in the parable of the sower; riches, pleasures and cares for the things of this life, are called thorns which choke the word of God in a man's heart and make it unfruitful (Matt. 13:22). And surfeiting and drunkenness are said to be things which oppress the heart and make it heavy (Luke 21:34). And easy it were to shew by many testimonies that all these five

things do press down the heart; especially then, when it should be lifted up in the seeking of heavenly things.

Now in this, that these five things are weighty burdens, we may learn:

(1) First, what is the cause that in these our days everywhere the gospel of Christ being published, preached and expounded, takes so little place in men's hearts; whether we regard knowledge and understanding, or affection and obedience? For God's Word is a Word of power, mighty in operation. How comes it to pass then that the ground is barren where it is cast? Why does it not make men learned and religious? Answer: Surely in every place where the Word of God is preached, especially among us, these five things possess the hearts of men, and exercise all the thoughts of the mind and affections of the heart. From whence it cometh to pass that after long preaching there is little fruit or profit, either for knowledge or obedience; for where the heart is pressed down with the weight of these earthly things, there the Word of God can take no place, nor bring forth fruit. And this is generally true among us; though we hear God's Word from year to year, and thereby might increase in knowledge and obedience if we would; yet in many there is little shew of either; and the cause is in these worldly cares, which take the place in our hearts. For this is a most certain truth, that so long as our hearts are addicted to the greedy seeking after these earthly things: honours and pleasures etc.; so long will the ground of our heart be barren. The good seed of God's Word may be sown therein; but little fruit shall come thereof, save briars and weeds, which will increase our damnation.

(2) Again, whereas the love of temporal life and care of earthly things etc. are sore burdens pressing down a man's heart from heaven to

earth, and making it heavy and sad and dead in regard of all spiritual exercises and contemplations; hereby we are taught oftentimes to give ourselves to elevate and lift up our minds and hearts to God, partly by meditation in His Word, partly by invocation on His Name, and partly by thanksgiving. And to do these things the better, we must remember to set apart some special time every day for this special work; so as we may say with David (Psa. 25:1), Lord, I lift up my heart unto thee. David was well acquainted with this exercise, and so was Daniel; for both of them used this, as we may read (Psa. 55:17), Evening and morning (saith David) and at noon will I pray, and make a noise. And Daniel used to pray unto God three times a day (Dan. 6:10); wherein he would heartily and unfeignedly call upon God with thanksgiving. And great reason we should do so; for we live in the world, wherein are innumerable weighty things, which press down our hearts from looking up to heaven; and therefore we must often practice ourselves in holy meditation and prayer unto God, that so we may lift up our souls unto God from the things of this world. To use a fit comparison: we know that those who keep clocks, if they would have the clocks still going, must once or twice a day wind up the plummets which cause the wheels to go about; because they are still drawing downward. Even so, seeing our hearts have plummets of lead, which are worldly cares and desires, to press them down from seeking up to heaven; we must do with our hearts, as the clock-keeper doth with his plummets, wind them up unto God every day; and for this end, must set apart some particular time to do the same in holy duties. Why doth God command the seventh day to be sanctified, and set apart from all bodily exercises and worldly cares? Undoubtedly it is for this end: to cause men to elevate their hearts from all worldly things, to seek the things above; else, if the mind should be always pressed down with worldly cares, it could never attain to heaven's joys. He that hath no conscience on the Lord's day to lift up his heart to heaven by prayer, and hearing God's Word, with

meditation thereon; cannot possibly have any soundness in religion, nor his heart firmly settled on heavenly things.

(3) Thirdly, whereas the Holy Ghost saith that the Hebrews must cast away the weight that presseth down; here we are taught in what manner, and how far forth we must use the things of this life; as riches, honours and lawful pleasures; yea, and all temporal blessings whatsoever; namely, so far forth as they will further us in the course of religion, and in the exercise of godliness and virtue; and no further. But (finding by experience that these temporal things are a burden unto us, pressing us down and making us unfit for spiritual exercises) we must leave them, and abstain from them. This is that moderation which we must use in temporal things. For the main end that every man must propound to himself in all things, is this: That God may be glorified. Now, that a man may glorify God, it is necessary that he should walk in the ways of godliness and of true religion. Therefore look as riches and worldly commodities may further us in Christian religion and godliness; so far forth must we use them, and therein give glory to God; but when they hinder us therein, then we must leave them, and cast them off. The mariner that is upon the sea in a great tempest, seeing his ship too sore laden, will cast out any of his commodities; first, that that is heaviest, and at last (if need be) the most precious jewels that be in his ship before he will see it lost. Even so must we do in the sea of this world, when we see riches, honours and lawful pleasures to make us unfit and untoward for the exercises of piety and religion; then away with them, we must cast them off, how dear soever they be unto us. And thus much for the first duty.

2. The second duty that we must perform for constancy in religion is this: We must cast away the sin that hangeth so fast on; or as the words will better bear, We must cast away the sin that is so fit, or so

ready to compass us about every way. By sin here we must not understand actual sin, the practising of ungodliness in life and conversation; but original sin, which is the corruption of nature, in which men are conceived and born. Now this original sin is said to be ready to compass us about, because (as Paul saith of himself) when a man would do good, it causeth evil to be present with him; so as that good thing which he would do, that he doth not; but the evil that he would not do, that doth he (Rom. 7:19). And it is said, To compass us about; because whatsoever in heart a man doth desire or affect, or purpose to do, this original sin doth corrupt and defile the same unto him; and whatsoever in action a man would bring to pass, it doth likewise pollute it. By reason whereof it comes to pass that we may truly say that all the thoughts, affections, wills, and purposes, yea, and every action of God's children, are all mixed and stained with the corruption of this sin. So that this hinders God's dear servants and children that they cannot go on in the course of godliness and Christianity as they would; but either they fall in their journey many times; or if they stand, yet they do often stagger, and go very faintly and haltingly forward.

From this that the Holy Ghost saith, Original sin compasseth the believer about, we are to observe and learn sundry points:

(1) First, this serveth notably to confute some errors maintained and upheld by the church of Rome; for they say that after a man's regenerated by God's Spirit, there is nothing in him that God can justly hate; and they do curse all that hold the contrary. Now to ratify this their doctrine, that original sin, after regeneration, is not sin properly; they say that after regeneration it is no more sin than tinder is fire; which in itself is no fire, but very apt and fit upon the least occasion to be set on fire. But this opinion is here overthrown by this that the Holy Ghost saith, that the believing Hebrews, that is

God's church, must cast away this sin. Where it is plain that after regeneration, whereby a man receiveth the spirit of sanctification and adoption, he hath sin in him; for this sin is most apt and ready to hinder him in the course of Christianity and godliness. Now if sin were not properly sin, it must lose its own nature and quality; and if it had lost its proper quality, it would not be so ready to hinder a man in the course of godliness, both in thought, words and deeds. So that here it is manifest and plain that in a regenerate man there is sin properly; and howsoever he be free from the guilt and punishment of sin, yet the corruption remaineth still in him, though greatly weakened through sanctification.

Again, here observe that the opinion of many men concerning this sanctification is erroneous; for some there be who have thought that a man might be perfectly sanctified in this life, and have original sin quite abolished. But this is most false; for this church of the Hebrews had as worthy men in it for godliness and sanctification as any are in these days; yea, and the author of this epistle was (no doubt) a man that had received a great measure of sanctifying grace; yet including himself among them, he exhorts the Hebrews thus: Let us cast off the burden and sin that is so ready to compass us about. What? Had the apostle and these Christians sin in them? Yes, or else the Holy Ghost would never bid them cast it off; for it were a vain thing to bid them cast off that which they had not. Therefore they were not perfectly sanctified, as indeed no man ever was or shall be in this life, Christ only excepted. We must not marvel at this, that no man is perfect in this life; nay, we must rather marvel at this, that God hath given to any of us any drop of sound grace, being such miserable wretched sinners as we are.

The Lord Himself hath given many reasons why men should not be perfect in this life:

(i) As first: If a man were perfectly sanctified in this life, then were he perfectly just and righteous in himself before God, and so should be saved; yet not by free grace and mercy alone in Christ; and thus should Christ not be a whole and alone Saviour, but only a means to convey into a man that saving grace whereby a man should be saved. But Christ is our whole and only righteousness whereby we are justified and saved; and this may our corruption teach us which still remains in us, not quite mortified until the hour of death.

(ii) Secondly, whatsoever grace we receive of God, it comes by means of faith which God worketh in us. And look how it stands with us in regard of faith, so it is with us for all other graces. But faith in the best believer is imperfect in this life, and mixed with much doubting; and therefore all other gifts and graces which come by faith, as righteousness, repentance and sanctification, are also imperfect in this life.

(2) From this, that sanctification in this life is imperfect, we learn (for the overthrowing of another error of the church of Rome) that no man can stand at God's tribunal seat, satisfied by inherent justice or righteousness. For that which we call sanctification, the papists call the justification of a sinner; making two parts of justification: the first, whereby a sinner or an evil man is made good by the pardon of his sins and the infusion of inward righteousness, standing in hope and charity especially; and the second, whereby of a good man one is made better and more just; and this they say may proceed from the merit of a man's own works of grace; and hereby they hold a man stands righteous before God. But look how it stands with grace in us in this life, so likewise shall it stand with the same graces at the last day; if they be imperfect now, and so not able to justify us before God, they shall also be found imperfect then to that purpose and effect. But now they are imperfect, as hath been shewed, and

therefore cannot then stand for our righteousness; unless we will imagine that God will then accept of an imperfect justice. Wherefore their doctrine is erroneous, and a doctrine of all terror and desperation; for who dare adventure the salvation of his soul upon his own righteousness? We deny not but that God accepteth of our sanctification; yet not as the matter of our justification unto life; that only is the obedience and righteousness of Jesus Christ accepted of God for us, and made ours by faith; for that alone is answerable to the rigour of the law.

(3) Thirdly, this also sheweth the error of those that hold that concupiscence or original sin is not a quality, but an essence or substance living and subsisting by itself. For here we see a plain difference between a man's body and soul, and original sin that compasseth them; else the Holy Ghost would not bid us cast off this sin; for that which is of the substance of man cannot by man be cast off. And to make this more plain, we must know that in man descending from Adam there be three things: First, the substance of his soul and body. Secondly, the powers and faculties in them both. Thirdly, the corruption or bad disposition in those powers and faculties whereby a man is unconformable to the will of his Creator, and prone to that which is evil. And this third thing is it which is here spoken of, different from man's substance and faculties; and so is not a substance in man, or man's nature corrupted, but an ill disposition therein.

(4) Fourthly, hence also we learn what a regenerate man doth most feel in himself; namely, original sin, the corruption of his nature; for that hangs on fast, and hinders him in the practice of all good duties. This Paul knew well, and therefore confesseth that he saw another law in his members rebelling against the law of his mind, and leading him captive unto the law of sin which was in his members (Rom.

7:23). This causeth him to leave undone the good which he would have done; and to do the evil which he would not do (v.19). And David felt the same thing when he said, I will run the way of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart (Psa. 119:32). Why doth David speak of the enlarging of his heart? Surely he felt in himself this original sin; which did straiten his good affections, so as he could not put them forth so much as he would towards the law of God. And when he saith (Psa. 51:12) Stablish me, O Lord, by thy free spirit; he would give us to understand that by original corruption he was restrained of his Christian liberty, and hindered in all good affections, holy actions, and heavenly meditations; which causeth him to pray for liberty and freedom by the Spirit. So that it is plain, the servant of God feels this corruption clogging and hindering him from all good duties.

(i) This serves to admonish all secure persons, which never felt sin to be a clog or burden unto them, of their fearful and dangerous estate. For to every child of God, original corruption is a grievous burden. Now confer with a natural man, and ask him what imperfections and wants he feels in himself; and his answer is that he was never hindered by any corruption in all his life, he never felt doubting or want of love, either to God or to his brethren; he feels no pride of heart, no hypocrisy or vain glory etc. If we take these men upon their words, they are angels among men; but indeed they are blind and ignorant, and wonderfully deceived by Satan; for all God's servants in this life do continually bewail the corruption of their nature, crying out against original sin, that it hinders them in doing the good things which they would do; and causeth them to do the evil which they would not. These men therefore that are never troubled with corruption, but (to their own thinking) have grace at will, are in a fearful case, their minds are still blinded, and their hearts hardened; they are dead in sin, abiding in darkness unto this hour. And if they

go thus on to death, they shall find that sin will unvisor himself, and then they shall know what sin means, and find the terror, and feel the burden of it, when it is too late; like the foolish virgins that knew what the want of oil meant, when the doors were shut.

(ii) Secondly, this shews unto us what is the state and condition of the child of God in this life. He is not here a saint feeling no corruption, perfectly sanctified and freed from all sin; but such an one as feels the burden of corruption hindering him in his Christian course, under which he sighs and groans, labouring by all good means to be disburdened and to cast it off. It is indeed a matter of great comfort for a man to feel God's graces in himself; as faith, love, repentance sanctification, and such like; but no child of God can always or alone feel the comfort of grace; most commonly he shall be troubled with sin, if he be God's child. Now if feeling it, he dislike himself, and strive to be eased of it; this is a sure argument of his happy estate.

(5) Fifthly, the commandment to cast away sin that presseth down, teacheth every child of God to labour earnestly for the for the government and direction of God's Spirit. For we have within us original corruption, that like an armed man besets us about, and hindereth us in every good thing we take in hand. We must therefore pray unto God daily that he would guide us by His good Spirit; for by reason of the corruption of our nature and the deceitfulness of sin, we shall utterly fail, unless God's Spirit governs us, both in the thoughts of our hearts, in the words of our mouths, and the actions of our lives. This David knew well, and therefore prayeth to the Lord for His good Spirit, to lead him into the land of righteousness (Psa. 143:10).

(6) Lastly, seeing we have this corruption of nature in us, we must keep our hearts with all diligence, and set watch and ward about them. So Solomon saith, Counterguard thy heart, my son (Prov. 4:23). Why doth Solomon give this commandment? Surely for special cause; for every man while he lives on earth is compassed about with his own corrupt nature; which like a home-born traitor seeks to deliver the heart into the possession of Satan, and so to defraud God of His right. Again, the heart is man's treasure, from whence comes all actions, good and bad. Now, if it be well kept and guarded, the Lord will dwell in thy heart, and thence will proceed the issues of life. But if it be left open for corruption to enter and take place, then is it made an habitation for the devil.

If a city were besieged about by bloody enemies, the inhabitants thereof would set watch and ward in every place to keep out the enemy; so we, having original sin as a fierce enemy compassing us about for to work our destruction some way or other, must labour to have our hearts guarded with a watch of grace; that our corruption may not let in Satan there to dwell or to have any abode.

But (will some say) how shall we get a watch that may thus keep our hearts? Answer: We must labour that the Word of God may dwell plentifully in our hearts; and there, as the sceptre of Christ, to be held up by the grace of faith, ruling our wills and affections, and bringing into subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ. In such an heart Christ dwells, who is stronger than Satan; and here can neither corruption set open the door to Satan, nor Satan enter; but all things are in safety. Also the actions that proceed hence shall be the issues of life, being holy and pleasing unto God.

And thus much of the second point.

3. The third duty to be performed for our continuance in the faith is this: We must run with patience the race that is set before us. In these words the Holy Ghost borroweth a comparison from the games of men that did run a race; and thus we may conceive it. The race that the Holy Ghost propounds us to run is the race of Christian religion. The parties that must run in this race are all Christians; men or women, high or low, no-one excepted. The prize and crown for which we run is everlasting glory. The judge of the runners is the Lord Himself, who hath appointed this race unto every Christian in this life; who also will give the reward to everyone that runneth well.

In this comparison, we may observe many good instructions:

(1) First, in that Christian religion is compared to a race; we are taught that everyone that professeth religion must go forward therein, growing in knowledge, faith, piety, and in every grace of God. He that runs a bodily race, must neither stand still nor go backward (for then he shall never get the prize) but still go forward to the race end. So must every Christian go forward in grace, following hard towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God (Phil. 3:14). If we care not for eternal life, then we may take our ease and let grace alone; but if we tender our own salvation, we must go on in the graces of religion, as a runner doth go forward in his race. This being well observed, would rouse up our drowsy Christians that make no progress in religion.

(2) Secondly, this resemblance of Christianity to a race, teacheth us all to strive to go one before another in knowledge, faith and holy obedience; thus runners do that run a bodily race. Also in the world the manner of men is to labour and strive to go one before another in riches, preferment, in fine apparel and in bodily delights. Now shall men strive to be first in these transitory things, and shall we neglect

our duty about these spiritual graces? Wherein the more we excel, the more acceptable we are to God, and shall be more glorious in the world to come.

(3) Thirdly, seeing Christianity is a race, we must remember to be constant therein till we come to the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. It hath been the manner of our people to turn in religion with the state and time; and yet to this day many thousands come to our assemblies that would turn to popery, if that abomination should be set up again; for (say they) it was a merry world when that religion was up. But this is not the property of good runners. If we would have the crown of life, we must hold true religion constantly unto the death.

(4) Lastly, like good runners we must mind our way, and have our hearts set upon the end of our race, which is everlasting life. Each ordinary traveller is very inquisitive of his way, and all his care is to go the nearest way he can to his journey's end. Behold, we are travellers, and our journey is to heaven; we must therefore endeavour to go the straightest way we can, to come to life everlasting; neither must we make delays in the way, but use all help as to further us herein; for the matter is of great importance whereabouts we go.

Here some will say, We like this well; but true religion hath always many enemies and few hearty friends; besides, if a man run this way, he must run alone, and suffer many crosses and reproaches. Answer: This is most true; and therefore the Holy Ghost addeth that we must run this race with patience. We must not be discouraged because of these crosses and afflictions; but labour with patience to bear that part of afflictions, whatever it be, that shall light upon us in our journey. This is Christ's counsel to His disciples (Luke 21:19),

Possess your souls in patience; as if He should say: If you would save your souls, you must labour to bear all crosses that fall on you with patience. In the parable (Luke 8:15), They that receive the seed in good ground, are they which with an honest and good heart hear the word and keep it, and bring forth fruit. But how? With patience. Everyone that hears God's Word, and makes conscience thereof, will have enemies to scoff and mock, and to afflict him; which the devil sets awork to hinder the growth of the Word in his heart; but must he therefore cease to bring forth fruit? No, he must bring forth fruit with patience. And so must we do in the race of true religion; for crosses, afflictions and mockings will come; but these storms must not turn us back; nay, the more they beat upon us, the more must we arm ourselves with patience, by which we shall be able to bear them all.

And thus much for this third duty; and also for the exhortation unto constancy in the faith, after the example of all these godly fathers.

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1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which a

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had tra

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an i

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles wit

11 Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child

12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in m

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and wer

14. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they ha

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offe

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upo

22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a

24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who i

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first

29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were

30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spi

32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Sam

33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths

36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 3

38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and c

12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay asi