

The Trial & Triumph of Faith

SERMON 20

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YEA, the law from the highest bended love, even from love with all the whole soul, and all its strength, (Matt. 22,) forbiddeth all sin, no less than the gospel of love, which gospel doth spiritualize the law to the believer, but not abolish it. The gospel addeth a new argument of gospel love: because Christ hath died for me, therefore I will keep that same law of God I was under before; only, now, I fear not actual condemnation, which is accidental to the law, for Christ and the confirmed angels keep the law, as a rule of life, yet without any fear of actual condemnation. Nor doth the gospel more make David's adultery not to be against the Seventh Commandment to David, than it maketh the Israelites' spoiling of the Egyptians of their earrings and jewels, to be no breach of the Eighth Commandment. The grace of Christ doth privilege the believer from condemnation, which condemnation is a mere accident, which doth go and come without hurting the essence of the law, and its commanding and eternal moral-directing power. The law saith, Do and live; there is no exception of this—it is the will of God eternal, as God is eternal, and obligeth us in heaven, and for ever, (Rev. 22:5). But this, 'if you do not, you shall die,' hath a large exception; Christ my Son shall die for you; and this, 'if you keep not the law, you are condemned,' to the believer is abolished. And when we are (Rom. 7,) said to be freed from our first husband, as the woman is freed by law from her dead husband, and may, without sin, marry another, and we not under the law; the word (law) is taken only for the law, as given to the sinner. Now, the law should have been law, though sin had never been, and is law to the elect angels, who never sinned; and that is only the law, under the notion of that sad office of eternal condemnation. The law could never have been law, except it had promised eternal life to those who do the law. But it both is, and should have been law to believers in Jesus Christ, to the elect angels, and yet it doth not, it cannot actually condemn them.

But that the Gospel maketh adultery to be no sin to believers, is a blasphemous assertion. Then commit adultery, murder, whore, steal; O believer! these are not sins to thee,—but Christ's sins, not thine. Oh, turn not the grace of God into wantonness! The believer hath no conscience of sins: that is, he in conscience is not to fear everlasting condemnation; that is most true, because Christ hath delivered him from that wrath to come, (Rom. 8:1; John 5:24). Faith of eternal life by Jesus Christ, cannot consist with fear of eternal condemnation; for then, with a legal and an evangelic faith, one person should be obliged to believe things contradictory, and yet, both faiths oblige us to give credence and assent. But that

the believer hath no conscience of sin, that is, that he is to believe there is nothing in him that is sin, is to believe a lie, (1 John 1:8,9). That he is to confess no sin, and to be grieved in conscience for no sin, and to sorrow for no sin; that he is to be wearied and laden with no sin,—that he is to groan under the burden of no sin, as failing against the love of him that gave a ransom for him, this is a blasphemous easiness of conscience, yea, of a conscience past feeling. Beloved in the Lord, the gospel forbiddeth sorrow, fear, and agony of conscience, in a believer apprehending eternal wrath; such a one once truly believing in Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and his Saviour, and now believing the contrary, must believe that his Lord is really changed, that he hath forgotten to be merciful, that he hath falsified and altered his covenant, oath, and promise; this were to make God a liar. But the gospel forbiddeth not, but commandeth, that the justified person sorrow for sin; yea, it commandeth carefulness to forbear clearing of the offender, as being in Christ, and desiring to flee to Christ; indignation against himself, in not forgiving himself, fear of offending love and law in Christ, vehement desire to have peace confirmed, zeal for God, revenge to afflict the soul. (2 Cor. 7:10,11.) And in this sense it is blasphemy to say, that the gospel taketh away all conscience of sin. Believers humbled for sin, are to be taken off all law-thoughts and fear of eternal condemnation, and all thoughts that sorrow is a penance, and satisfactory to offended justice, as we are ready to conceit of our evangelic rejoicing, and holiest works. But they are to sorrow for offended love, for the body of sin breaking out in scandals. I may then have peace with God, in the assurance of remission and removal of eternal wrath, and yet not peace with my own conscience, (1.) Because I may be persuaded, that God in Christ hath forgiven me; yet am I not to forgive myself. (2.) I am to believe, that in Christ I am delivered from eternal wrath, and justified in Christ; and yet, to sorrow that I have sinned against Christ's love. (3.) I may have peace, sense of peace, and pardon in Christ; and yet a necessary unquietness, sorrow, and tears, that I should have been so unthankful to so lovely a Redeemer. So Christ doth commend the woman's tears, as a sign of love, and of the sense of many sins pardoned, "Thou gavest me no water for my feet;" but "she hath washed my feet with tears." (Luke 7:44.) Yet many sins were forgiven her, (verse 47).

Hence, I may, First, believe the remission of that sin for which I am to sorrow, and for the remission of which I am to pray, and which I am to confess. Nathan said to David, "Thy sin is pardoned:" yet the Spirit of God, after that, both confessed, sorrowed, prayed for pardon in David. (2.) We may comfort those that mourn for sin, from assurance of pardon, and yet exhort them to be humbled and afflicted in spirit, and to confess, sorrow, and pray for pardon: So Antinomians, rejoicing evermore after justification, without sorrow, remorse, down-casting for sin at all, is but fleshly wantonness. I may have, and ought to have, a disquieted spirit, and no peace with myself, and yet peace with God, even as the sea after a storm, and when the winds are gone, and the air is calmed, hath yet a raging and a great motion, by reason of wind enclosed in the bowels of the sea; and after the cool of a mighty fever, yet are the humours in the body stirred and distempered.

But we are hence led to find out resolution for divers cases of consciences after justification.

1. Many dare not question their state of justification, and so are freed from the storms of apprehended wrath, arising from the guilt of sin. Yet there is another storm within the bowels of the sea, arising from the indwelling of the body of guilt. The storm before justification is less free, less ingenuous, more servile, as looking to that eternal wrath hanging over the soul for unpardoned sin: this is more free, and is a peaceable, a gracious, and heavenly storm raised, not for sin un-pardoned, and the eternal punishment thereof, but for sin as sin, as indwelling; not for the penal guilt and the sting of hell, in sin, but for the sinful guilt and the wounding of Christ. (2.) It is impossible this latter storm can be in the soul, till the sentence of justification be pronounced; as none can have the moved bowels of a son for the offence of a father, till he be a son.

2. Another case is, that many have an absolute, loose, and lax peace and calmness, great confidence of deliverance from eternal wrath, and so, of a supposed pardon, whose peace is convinced to be but a base outside, and mere painting and gilding, because there is in them no storm for sin as sin, and for the over-motions of boiling lusts; no tenderness to walk spiritually. A faith that eateth out the bottom and bowels of conscience, of declining sin, and walking with God, is the justification of the Antinomians, of the old Gnostics, of the natural men: all our professors are cured, none, or few, are healed.

3. Full assurance that Christ hath delivered Paul from condemnation, yea, so full and real, as produceth thanksgiving and triumphing in Christ, (Rom. 7:25, 8:1,2,) may and doth consist with complaints and outcries of a wretched condition for the indwelling of the body of sin, (Rom. 7:14-16,23,24). Then the justified, that are whole, not sick, not pained, are yet in their sins, and not justified, whatever Antinomians say on the contrary.

4. The flesh in the justified cannot complain of indwelling sin; but the flesh, mixed with some life of Christ, may raise a false alarm of sins not pardoned, which are really pardoned. Some false grief may, and often hath, its rise from a false and imaginary ground; as a sanctified soul may praise God, through occasion of a lying report of the victory of the church, when there is no such matter. A sanctified child may spiritually mourn for the supposed death of his father, or that he hath offended his father according to the flesh, when his father is neither dead, nor offended at all. So, gracious affections, as gracious, may work spiritually upon supposed and false grounds, when there is no cause,—as, that the soul hath grieved his heavenly Father, and that he is displeased, when it is not so.

5. Sin indwelling is a greater evil, than the feared evil of ten hells; and, therefore, there is more cause of sorrow for sin, confession, unquietness of spirit after

justification, than before; because sin, the only true object of fear and disquietude of spirit, is both a guest dwelling in the soul, and is more really and distinctly apprehended as a spiritual evil, after the light of faith hath shown us the sinfulness of sin, than ever it was discovered to be before.

6. I doubt, if justified souls are to be refuted in their complaints and fears, for the indwelling of sin, providing they fear not eternal wrath: which fear is contrary to faith; and so they fear not, and sorrow not, for that God hath changed the court, and the wind of his love turned in the contrary air, and he hath forgotten to be merciful.

7. Faith chargeth us to believe that grace shall, at length, finally subdue sin. And, as boatmen labour with oars, to promote their course in sailing, even when wind, sails, and tide are doing somewhat to promote the course; so doth faith, which purifieth the heart, set the soul on work "to perfect holiness in the fear of God," and believeth also, that God shall work both to will and to do.

It is not then good physic for many exercised in conscience, especially after their first conversion, to apply only the honey and sweetness of consolations of the gospel, as if there were not any need of humiliation, and sorrow for sin. Yet it is to be cleared, that, (1.) Sorrow for sin, is no satisfaction for sin; for the pride of merit is crafty, and can creep in at a small hole. We think there is no repentance where there be no tears; and God of purpose withholdeth tears, as knowing, when water goes out, wind cometh in. (2.) They are tenderly to be bound up and comforted, in whom sin riseth up with a witness. Oh, what pity and humble on-looking should be here! For a hell of pain in the body is nothing; wheels, racks, whips, hot-irons, breaking of bones is nothing; but half a hell in the spirit, is a whole hell. The upper hell, the grave, to Hezekiah, is like to swallow him up, when dipped in the lower hell, and covered with the apprehension of wrath. O sweet Jesus! what a mercy that thou swallowed up all hells to believers, and calmed the sea of hell.

USE 1. If in justification, sins be blotted out, cast in the depths of the sea, and removed, as if they never had been, the state of justification must be a condition of sound blessedness, the most desirable life in the world, even as David also described the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works. "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." (Rom. 4:6,7.) For, consider, (1.) What an act of grace it is in a prince, to take a condemned malefactor from under the axe, the rack, the wheel, and so many hours' torture, before he end his miserable life. Or, (2.) Suppose he were condemned to be tortured leisurely, and his life continued and prorogated, that bones, sinews, lungs, joints, might be pained for twenty or thirty years, so much of his flesh cut off every day, such a bone broken, and by art the bone cured again, and the flesh restored, that he might, for thirty years' space, every day be dying, and yet never die. Or, (3.) Imagine a man could be kept alive in torment in this case, from sleep, ease, food, clothing, five hundred years, or a

thousand years, and boiling all the time in a cauldron full of melted lead; and say the soul could dwell in a body under the rack, the wheel, the lashes and scourges of scorpions, and whips of iron, the man bleeding, crying, in the act of dying for pain, gnawing his tongue for ten hundred years: Now, suppose a mighty prince, by an act of free grace, could and would deliver this man from all this pain and torture, and give him a life in perfect health, in ten hundred paradises of joy, pleasure, worldly happiness, and a day all the thousand years without a night, a summer all this time, without cloud, storm, winter; all the honour, acclamations, love, and service of a world of men and angels,—clothe this man with all the most complete delights, perfections, and virtues of mind and body—set him ten thousand degrees of elevation, to the top of all imaginable happiness, above Solomon in his highest royalty, or Adam in his first innocency, or angels in their most transcendent glory and happiness: —Yea, (4.) In our conception, we may extend the former misery and pain, and all this happiness, to the length of ten thousand years;—this should be thought incomparably the highest act of grace and love that any creature could extend to his fellow-creature. And yet, all this were but a shadow of grace, in comparison of the love and rich grace of God in Christ, in the justification of a sinner.

USE 2. Consider we are freed from the guilt of sin in justification: Now, (1.) this is the eternal debt of sin, that remaineth after sin, that none can wash away but Christ, and that this remaineth after sin is acted. (2.) That it remaineth for eternity. (3.) That it is a misery we are only in justification delivered from, is clear in Scripture, (1.) Because sin is a debt: After the borrowed money is spent and gone, somewhat in law and justice remaineth, and this is debt or obligation to make payment to the creditor. (2.) So the Scripture speaketh, “For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thy iniquity is marked before me.” (Jer. 2:22.) Borith is an herb that fullers use for washing and purging; yet is sin such a leopard-spot, that no art, no industry of the creature can remove it: “the sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond; it is graven upon the table of their heart, and the horns of your altars.” (Jer. 17:1.) There is [1.] writ remaining after sin is acted. [2.] Writ written with a pen of iron and diamond, to endure for eternity. [3.] Not written only, but engraved, and indented upon the conscience. When David rent the robe of Saul, his heart smote him, so that it left a hole, or the mark of the stripe behind it; (1 Sam. 24:5;) as when a burning iron is put on the face of an evil-doer, it leaveth behind it a brand, or a stigma. This is terrible, that this brand is eternal; as the prophet prayeth, “Let the iniquities of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out; let them be before the Lord continually.” (Psalm 109:14,15.) O dreadful! The sins of wicked men shall stand up in heaven before the justice of God, so long as God shall live, and that is for ever and ever. So the Lord sweareth by the excellency of Jacob, that is, by himself, “Surely, I will never forget any of their works.” (Amos 8:7.) All that ever came before me, all that came not in by me, the door and the way, they are thieves and robbers. (John 10:8.) The false prophets, many of them, were dead, yet being dead (saith Christ) this day they are, in regard of guilt, thieves and robbers. To this day,

above sixteen hundred years, the Jews are guilty murderers, though their fathers, who slew the Lord of glory, be dead. This day, Cain is a murderer, Judas a traitor, and shall be, so long as God shall live and be God. Now, without shedding of Christ's blood, there is no remission of sins, (Heb. 9:22). To be delivered from eternal debt, and entitled to an eternal kingdom, is a life most desirable, and maketh the sinner to stand in the books of Christ, as the eternally engaged debtor of grace. Young heirs, know your blessedness aright. Sinners under eternal debt; you laugh, sport, rejoice; and you are firebrands of wrath. You go singing, and shaking and tinkling your bolts and fetters of black and unmixed vengeance. Alas! how can you sleep? How can you laugh and sing?

"Eat the crumbs." The dogs desire but the least, and (to speak so) the refuse of Christ. The meanest and worst things of Christ (to speak so) are incomparably to be desired above all things. (1.) Any thing of Christ is desirable; but to lay hold on the skirt of a Jew, (Zech. 10:23,) because Christ that is with him is good—yea, the dust of Zion is a thing that the servants of God take pleasure in, (Psalm 102:14). The dust and stones of Zion are not like the earth; and the mules [clods] of the holy grave, as papists fondly dream, and are but earth, but because the Lord Christ dwelleth there, therefore are they desirable. The people carried their old harps to Babylon with them, and Joseph's bones must be carried out of Egypt to Canaan. Why? Canaan was Christ's land, his dwelling. Why? but we are to love the ground which Christ's feet treadeth on. This I say, not that I judge it holy earth—that is Popish superstition—but that such is Christ's excellency, that any thing that hath the poorest relation to him, is desirable for him. (2.) A poor woman, sought no more of him, but to wash the feet of Christ, and kiss them. (Luke 7.) Another woman, "If I may but touch the border of his garment, I shall be whole." (Matt. 9:21.) Mary Magdalene sought but to have her arms filled with his dead body. She saith, weeping, to the gardener, as she supposed, "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." (John 20:15.) To Joseph of Arimathea, his bloody winding sheet, and his dead, and holed, and torn body in his arms, are sweet. Christ's clay is silver, and his brass gold. (3.) Christ's sharpest rebukes are sweet oil; the wounds and the holes that the sweet Mediator maketh in the soul, when he smiteth with the rod of his mouth, are with child of comforts; he rebuked not the serpent, as not minding salvation to Satan, but rebuked Eve, intending the promised seed for her. Oh, what sweetness of love is that expression, "For since I spake against Ephraim, I do earnestly remember him; I will surely have mercy on him, saith the Lord." (Jer. 31:20.) Then rebuking of Ephraim, which is called speaking against him, is dipped in mercy. "My people are bent to backsliding;" this is a rebuke sharp enough: Yet He chides himself friends with the people, "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim; mine heart is turned within me." (Hosea 11:7,8.) Here is kissing, and love wrapped about rebukes. So Jer. 3:1. "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers:" but see mercy: "Yet return to me, saith the Lord." (4.) His black and sour cross is sweet, and honeyed with comfort; his dead body a bundle of myrrh, (Cant. 1:13,) the smell of which is strong and fragrant, and sweateth out precious gum, rejoicing in tribulations. Count it joy, all joy, when you fall into divers

temptations, (James 1:2). The eagles smell heaven in the cross, and Christ in it; yea, the refuse, and the worst of Christ's cross, the shame and the reproaches of Christ, are sweeter and more choice to Moses, than the treasures, riches, yea, than the kingdom of Egypt, and the glory of it, (Heb. 11:26,27,)—yea, the shame and blushing on Christ's fair face, which he suffered under the cross, is fairer than rubies and gold, and hath the colour of the heaven of heavens. (Heb. 12:2.) Nebuchadnezzar hath more pain and torment in persecuting, than the three children had in being persecuted. (Dan. 4:19.) There is pain and fury in active persecution: "He was full of fury, and the form of his visage changed;" but there is joy unspeakable, and glorious, in passive persecution. Christ's sanctified cross droppeth honey; Christ's gloomings, and sad desertions, though to the believer they be death and hell, yet have much of heaven in them. So, Psalm 30:7, "Thou turnedst away thy face, and I was troubled;" (Niuhal) I was troubled like a withered flower, that loseth sap and vigour; (so, Exod. 15:15, "The dukes of Edom (Niuhaln) were amazed;") yet at that time David prayed, cried, and was heard. (verses 8-10.)

The sweetest communion that Christ seeketh of us on earth is prayer, (Cant. 2:14, and Cant. 5). Desertion is death itself, and a death to the soul: "I opened to my beloved, and my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone." And what was the Church's case? "My soul went forth from me." The Arabic, "My soul departed, I died;" so is death described by the like phrase, (Gen. 35:18,) Rachel's soul was in departing, for she died: And when men are stricken with sudden fear, the heart is said to go out: So, (Gen. 42:28,) the soul of Joseph's brethren departed, that is, they were extremely amazed, when they found their money in their sacks. The like was the case of the Church when Christ departed, she died for sorrow, the soul departed from the soul, because her Lord and beloved was gone. Yet even that death, that soul-hell in the want of Christ was a heaven, it was a sweet and a comfortable season; then hath she a communion with him in a most heavenly manner, (1.) Asking at the watchman for him. (2.) In binding sad charges on the daughters of Jerusalem, to commend her to God by prayer. (3.) Then was she sick of love for him. (4.) Then fell she out in that large love-rapture, in a most heavenly praise of him in all his virtues, "My well-beloved is white and ruddy, and the chief amongst ten thousand." Here, then, the hell that Christ throweth the saints in, in their desertions, is their heaven.

The meanest and lowest relation with Christ is honour. John Baptist placeth an honour in unloosing the latchets of his shoes, and thinketh, to bear his shoes is more honour than he deserveth, (John 1:27). David, a great prophet, appointed to be a king: Oh, if I might be so near the Lord, as to be a door-keeper in his house, (Psalm 84:10). He putteth a happiness on the sparrow and the swallow, that may build their nests beside the Lord's altar. Then the fragments and crumbs that his dogs eat, must be the dainties of heaven, and Christ's water the wine of heaven. Now, if any, the lowest thing of Christ, the morsel of his dogs, be desirable, how sweet must himself be? If the parings of his bread be sweet, what must the great loaf, Christ himself, be? Christ himself is so taking a lover, he hath

a face that would ravish love out of devils, so they had grace to see his beauty; he could lead captive all hearts in hell with the loveliness of his countenance, which is white and ruddy, and pleasant as Lebanon, if they had eyes to behold him. Oh, he himself is an unknown lover; he hath neither brim nor bottom; his gospel is the unsearchable riches of Christ. His gospel is but a creature; how unsearchable must he himself be? The wise man, putteth a riddle upon all the wisest on the earth, Solomon and all: What is his name? We know neither name nor thing; (Prov. 30:4). “Who shall preach his generation?” (Isa. 53:8.) Oh, what a mercy, that he will give sinners leave to love him! Or honour us so much, that we may lay our black and spotted love, on so lovely and fair a Saviour! That such an infinite and desirable love as Christ’s love, should come (to borrow that expression,) within the sides of thy love and heart, is a wonder. Alas, it is a narrow circle, and not capacious to contain him and his love, that passeth knowledge, (Eph. 3:19); it overpasseth and transcendeth far the narrow comprehension of created knowledge, either of men or angels.

To seek grace is desirable: but suppose any person were a mass, and nothing but composed of pure grace, and yet want Christ himself, he should be but a broken lamed creature. Put a soul in heaven, and let him be hated of Christ (if that were possible), heaven should be hell. Imagine devils were standing with their black chains of darkness, even up in the heaven of heavens, and the plague of being hated of Christ on their soul, and that they could see Him that sitteth on the throne, and somewhat of the rays and beams of that fullness of God that is in Christ; yet should devils still be devils, they wanting Christ, the heaven of angels and glorified men. What a flower! what a rose of love and light must Christ be, who filleth with smell, light, beauty, the four sides, east and west, south and north, of the heaven of heavens, and his glory! Suppose in the hour of our last farewell to time, all creatures void of reason, heavens, stars, light, air, earth, sea, dry land, birds, fishes, beasts, were in a capacity to love us, and they, with men and angels, should let out upon us the fullness, yea the sea of all their love (as it is a sweet thing to be lovely and desirable to many), yet this were nothing to him who is all desires or all loves, (Cant. 5:16). So Vatablus rendereth it, Christus est totus desideria. He is a mass of love, and love itself; lovely in the womb, the Ancient of Days became young for me; lovely in the cross, even when despised and numbered with thieves; lovely in the grave, lovely at the right hand of God, lovely in his second appearance in glory: yea, all desirable, his countenance white and ruddy; his head a golden head; (Cant. 6:10,11;) his headship and government desirable; his locks bushy and black; his counsels deep, various, unsearchable; his eyes as doves, chaste, pure, and can behold no iniquity; his cheeks, or two sides of his face, as a bed of spices and sweet smelling flowers; his face manly, comely as Lebanon; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh; his gospel smelleth of heaven: his hands pure, his works holy, fair, as gold rings set with beryl: his belly, or breast and bowels, as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires—that is, his breast and belly, that containeth his bowels, his heart and affections, are as ivory, bright and glorious; and as ivory overlaid, covered, and adorned with sapphires, that are precious stones of a sea-blue and heavenly

colour, because his bowels and inward affections are full of love, tenderness of mercy, and the compassion of his heart most heavenly: his legs are pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold; his ways and government like marble pillars, upright, white, pure, and set on gold, solid, firm, stable, that Christ cannot slip or fall; his sceptre, a sceptre of righteousness, and his kingdom eternal, and cannot be shaken: his countenance as the mountain Lebanon, his person eminent, goodly, high, great, tall, fruitful as cedars: his mouth most sweet, his words and testimonies as honey, or the honey-comb. Yea, all creatures are weak, and Christ strong; all base, he precious; all empty, he full; all black, he fair; all foolish and vain, he wise, and the only counsellor, deep in his counsels and ways. The special evangelic sin that we are guilty of is unbelief, (John 16:9,) and this floweth from a low estimation we have of Christ; and therefore these considerations are to be weighed in our estimation of Christ.

1. The wisdom or folly of any man is most seen in the estimative faculty, for it denominateth a man wise. Many are great judges, and learned, as the magicians of Chaldea, and philosophers, who know wonders, hidden things, and causes of things, and yet are not wise, but fools, (Rom. 1:21,) and vain in their imaginations, because there is a great defect in their estimative faculty in the choice of a God, (verses 22, 23), the practical mind is blinded, and they choose darkness for light, evil for good, a creature for their God. "By faith Moses, when he was come to age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." (Heb. 11:25.) And how is his faith made faith? And how is it evident, that he was not a raw, ignorant, and foolish child, when he made the choice; but a man ripe, come to years, and so, as wise as he was old? It is proved, because his estimative faculty was right, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches, than the treasures of Egypt." He is a wise man who maketh a wise choice, and for this cause, Esau is called a profane man; (Heb. 12:26;) he had not wisdom to put a difference between the excellency of the birthright, and a morsel of meat. A profane wicked man hath not wisdom to esteem God and Christ above the creature, but confoundeth the one with the other.

2. Our esteem of Christ is to be pure, chaste, spiritual, and so to work purely; that is, the formal reason why we esteem of Christ, must be, because he is Christ, and not because summer goeth with Christ; nay, not because he comforteth, but because he is God, the Redeemer and Mediator. It is a chaste love, and a chaste esteem, if the wife choose to love her husband, because he is her husband, as the sense esteemeth white to be white, under the notion of such a colour. The operation of every faculty is most pure, and kindly, when it is carried toward its object, according to its formal reason, without any mixture of other respects; extraneous and by-reasons are more whorish, less con-natural, not so chaste: there is some wax in our honey, and this we should take heed unto; the elective power is a tender piece of the soul.

3. Estimation produceth love, even the love of Christ; and love is a great favourite, and is much at court, and dwelleth constantly with the king. To be much with Christ, especially in secret, late and early, and to give much time to converse with Christ, speaketh much love; and the love of Christ is of the same largeness and quantity with grace, for grace and love keep proportion one with another.

4. He who duly esteemeth Christ, is a noble bidder, and so a noble and liberal buyer. He out-biddeth Esau; what is pottage to Christ? he over-biddeth Judas; what is silver to Christ? Yea, ta panta, all things [Phil. 3:8], is the greatest count can be cast up; for it includeth all prices, all sums; it taketh in heaven, as it is a created thing. Then, all things, the vast and huge globe and circle of the capacious world, and all excellencies within its bosom or belly; nations, all nations; angels, all angels; gold, all gold; jewels, all jewels; honour and delights, all honour, all delights, and every all beside, lieth before Christ, as feathers, dung, shadows, nothing. To wash a sinner, is the eminency of love, and the highest esteem of him: but, oh, what a mercy, that Christ should defile his precious, sinless, royal, and princely blood, by dipping in such a loathsome, foul, and deformed creature as a sinner is, (Rev. 1:5).

“Dogs eat the crumbs.” Here be degrees of persons and things in our Father’s house, children and dogs; yet dogs which the lord of the house owneth. Here is a high table and bread; and a by-board, or an after-table, and crumbs for dogs. Here be persons of honour, kings’ sons clothed in scarlet, and sitting with the king at dinner, when his spikenard sendeth forth a smell; and here be some under the table, at the feet of Christ, waiting to receive the little drops of the great honey-comb of rich grace that falleth from him. Follow Christ, and grace shall fall from him; his steps drop fatness, especially in his palace. There be in our Lord’s house little children, babes; there be in it also experienced ancient fathers (for grace hath grey hairs for wisdom, not for weakness); there be strong men also. (1 John 2:12-14). Christ was once a little stone, but he grew a great mountain that filled the whole earth, yea, and the heaven too: Christ is a growing child. In Christ’s lower firmament, there be stars of the first and second magnitude; and in his house, vessels of great and of small quantity, cups and flagons, (Isa. 22:24,) yet all are fastened upon the golden nail, Jesus Christ. (2.) All are in the way, the plants all growing; but one is a grain of mustard seed, and a rose not broken out to the flower, and another is a great tree. It is morning, and but the glimmering of the rays of the day-star in one; and it is high sun, perfect day, near the noon-day with another. Strong father Abraham, mighty in believing, was once a babe on the breasts, that could neither creep, nor stand, nor walk. The love of Christ in its first rise, is a drop of dew that came out of the womb of the morning; the mother, in one night, brought forth an host, and innumerable millions of such babes, and covered the face of the earth with them. But this drop of dew groweth to a sea that swelleth up above hell and the grave, (Cant. 8:6,7); it is more than all the floods and seas of the earth, and floateth up to the heaven of heavens, and up, and in, it must be upon Christ. Ye see not Christ, yet ye love him, (1 Pet. 1:8). It

overfloweth Christ, and taketh him, and ravisheth his heart. It is a strong chain that bindeth Christ, when the grave, sin, death, devils, could not bind him, (Cant. 4:9; Acts 2:24). (3.) Christ's way of administration is a growing way; his kingdom is not a standing, nor a sitting, nor a sleeping kingdom, but it is walking and posting: "Thy kingdom come." An increasing kingdom, a growing peace, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end," (Isaiah 9:7). In regard of duration, even in heaven, there shall be a growing of his kingdom. There is not yesterday, and to-morrow, and the next year, in heaven; yet there is a negative increase; glory and peace shall ascend in continuance, and never come to an height, the sun never decline; the long day of Christ's glory and peace shall never end. Christ is saying even now, 'Father, I must have all my children up with me, that where I am, there they may be also.' And therefore the Head draws up to him now a finger, then a toe; now an arm, then a leg; he hath been these sixteen hundred years since his ascension, drawing up by death, whole churches, the saints at Corinth, at Rome, at Philippi. The seven candlesticks, and the seven stars of Asia, are long ago up above Orion and the seven stars; and are now shining up before the throne. This consecrated Captain of our salvation will not sleep, till his Father's house be filled; till all the numerous offspring, and the generations of the first-born, be up under one roof with their Father. Heaven is a growing family, the Lord of the house hath been gathering his flocks into the fair fields of the land of praises, ever since the first Abel died; and down all along, the believers were gathered to their fathers.

USE 1. Is, that we despise not the day of small things. God's beginning of great works is small. What could be said of a poor woman's throwing of a stool at the man who did first read the new service book in Edinburgh? It was not looked at as any eminent passage of divine providence; yet it grew, till it came up to armies of men, the shaking of three kingdoms, the sound of the trumpet, the voice of the alarm, the lifting up of the Lord's standard, destruction upon destruction, garments rolled in blood;—and goeth on in strength, that the vengeance of the Lord, and the vengeance of his temple, may pursue the land of graven images, and awake the kings of the earth to rise in battle against the great whore of Babylon, that the Jews may return to their Messiah, and Israel and Judah ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, weeping as they go; that the forces of the Gentiles, and the kingdoms of the world, may become the kingdoms of God and of his Son Jesus Christ. And this act of a despised woman, was one of the first steps of Omnipotency; God then began to open the mouth of the vial of his wrath, to let out a little drop of vengeance upon the seat of the Beast; and ever since, the right arm of the Lord awaking, hath been in action, and in a growing battle against all that worshipped the Beast, and received his mark on their right hand, and their forehead. And who knoweth but Christ is in the act of conquering, to create a new thing on the earth, and subdue the people to himself? Omnipotency can derive a sea, a world of noble and glorious works, from as small a fountain as a straw, a ram-horn, yea, jaw-bone of a dead ass. God can put forth omnipotency in all its flowers and golden branches of overpowering and incomparable excellencies, upon mere nothing: the wind is an empty un-solid

thing, the sea a fluid and soft and ebbing creature; yet the wind is God's chariot, he rideth on it; and the sea his walk, his paths are in the great waters.

USE 2. A crumb that falleth from Christ's table, hath in it the nature of bread. Some weak ones complain, Oh, I have not the heart of God, like David, nor the strong faith of Abraham, to offer my son to death for Christ; nor the burning fire of the zeal of Moses, to wish my name may be razed out of the book of life, that the Lord may be glorified; nor the high esteem of Christ, to judge all but loss and dung for Jesus Christ, as Paul did. But what if Christ set the whole loaf before the children? Is it not well, if thou lie but under Christ's feet, to have the crumbs of mercy that slip through the fingers of Christ? The lowest room in heaven, even behind the door, is heaven. (1.) There's a minimum quod sic, the lowest measure, or grain of saving grace, and it is saving grace; a drop of dew is water, no less than the great globe and sphere of the whole element of water, is water; a glimmering of morn-dawning light is light, and of the same nature with the noon-light that is in the great body of the sun: the motion of a child newly formed in the belly, is an act of life, no less than the walking and breathing of a man of thirty years of age, in his flower and highest vigour of life; the first stirrings of the new birth, are the workings and operations of the Holy Ghost; and the love of God, even now shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, shall remain the same in nature with us in heaven, (1 Cor. 13:8-10). (2.) Christ doth own the bruised reed, and the smoking flax, so far forth, as not to crush the one, nor to quench the other; and can with tender cautiousness of compassion, stoop, and with his arm go between the lamb on the margin and brink of hell, as to save it from falling down headlong over the brow of the mountain. He "healeth the broken in heart," (Psalm 147:3,) and as a surgeon (so Vatablus expoundeth it) "bindeth up their wounds," and putteth the broken bones in their native place again. And whereas young ones are easily affrighted, yea, and distracted with fear, when sudden cries and hideous war-shouts surprise them, Christ affrighteth not weak consciences with shouts, to put poor tender souls out of their wits with the shouts of armies, of the terrors of hell in the conscience; yea, the meek Lord Jesus "shall not cry nor lift up (a shout) nor cause his voice be heard in the street," (Isaiah 42:2). Oh, what bowels! what stirrings, and boilings, and wrestlings of a pained heart touched with sorrow, are in Christ Jesus! When he saw the people scattered as sheep having no shepherd, he was bowelled in heart, his bowels were moved with compassion for them, (Matt. 9:36). Oh, how sweet! that thy sinful weakness should be sorrow and pain to the bowels and heart of Jesus Christ, so as infirmity is your sin, and Christ's pity and compassion. Can the father see the child sweat, wrestle under an over-load till his back be near broken, and he cry, "I am gone," and his bowels not be moved to pity, and his hands not stretched out to help? Were not the bowels and heart of that mother made of a piece of the nether mill-stone; had she not sucked the milk and breast of a tiger, and seemed rather to be the whelp of a lion, than a woman, who should see her young child drowned, and wrestling with the water, and crying for her help, and yet she should not stir, nor be moved in heart, nor

run to help? This is but a shadow of the compassion that is in that heart dwelling in a body personally united to the blessed Godhead in Jesus Christ.

We should have tender hearts toward weak ones; considering, (1.) That Christ cannot disinherit a son for weakness. (2.) Love is not broken with a straw, or a little infirmity. (3.) All the vessels of Christ's house are not of one size. (4.) Some men's infirmities are as transparent crystal, easily seen through; others have infirmities under their garments. (5.) We shall see many in heaven, whom we judged to be cast-aways, while they lived with us on earth. (6.) Many go to heaven with you, and you hear not the sound of their feet in their journey.

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