



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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Christ In The Believer's Arms

By Ebenezer Erskine

“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.” —Psalm 73:25.

“Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God.” —Luke 2:28.

In the preceding context, from verse 25th and downward, we have the following particulars recorded concerning Simeon, of whom my text speaks:

1. We have an account of his character, ver. 25. He was a *just and devout man*; that is, one that was conscientious of the duties of the first and second table of the law; just towards man, and devout towards God. Note, That there are no barren branches in Christ the true vine: “They that have believed in him, will be careful to maintain good works, and will have a respect to all his commandments.” Another part of Simeon’s character is, that he “waited for the consolation of Israel;” that is, for Christ the promised Messiah, who is, has been, and will be the foundation of consolation to all be believers, in all ages and periods of time; and “blessed are all they that wait for him, for they shall not be confounded.” Another part of his character is, that “the Holy Ghost was upon him;” and that both as a Spirit of prophecy, and a Spirit of holiness. It is the privilege of all true believers, that they have “the Spirit of glory, and of God resting upon them,” 1 Pet. 4:14.
2. We have here a promise made to Simeon, ver. 26: “And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” In this promise, Simeon saw him by the eye of faith, before he saw him by the eye of his body. Note, that faith’s views of Christ in the promise, makes way for the perceptible manifestations of him here, and the immediate enjoyment of him hereafter: Eph. 1:13: “After that ye believed, ye were sealed.”
3. We have the time when, and the place where Simeon had this promise actually accomplished to him, ver. 27; it was in the “temple, when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law.” Note, They who would have a meeting with Christ, must wait upon him in his temple, and ordinances of his appointment; for it is there that “every one doth

speaking of his glory.” 4. In the words of my text we have Simeon’s welcome and the kindly reception he gave to the Messiah, when he met him in the temple: “Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God.”

Where notice, 1. Simeon’s privilege, “He took him up in his arms,” namely, in the arms of his body: but at the same time he embraced him also in the arms of faith and took him up as the salvation of God; otherwise he could never have blessed God for him, as the promised Messiah, “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.” I am ready to believe, that there were many who got Christ in their arms, when he was an infant, who never had him formed in their hearts: but Simeon got him both in the arms of his body and soul at once. Some may be ready to think, O what a happy man was Simeon, and what a sweet arms-full had he, when he had the great Messiah, Immanuel, God-man, in his bodily arms! It is true, indeed, this was a privilege; but yet his greatest privilege was, that he had him clasped in his arms of faith. And though now his body be out of our reach, yet still there is access to embrace him in a way of believing: and this is what every true believer has the experience of, either in less or more. 2. In the words we have Simeon’s gratitude for this privilege: *he blessed God*. He is in an attitude of praise, being “filled with joy and peace in believing.” And his heart is so big with praise, that he wishes immediately to be away to the land of praise, where he might get a well-tuned harp put into his hand, and join with the hallelujahs of the redeemed above: *Now, says he, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace*. So much for explication of the words.

Before I proceed to the doctrine I intend to emphasise, we may observe, from the text and context, 1. That God’s word of promise to his people is sure, and never fails of accomplishment. Simeon here had got a promise from the Lord, “that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ;” and, accordingly, my text gives an account of its accomplishment. O sirs, venture on God’s word of promise, and look on it as the best security; *faithful is he that hath promised*: his naked word is as good as payment; he never broke his word to man; yea, “it is impossible for him to lie.” 2. That believers will find God not only as good, but better than his word, when he comes, in his own time, to make out his promise to them. Simeon had a promise, that he should only see the Messiah before he died; but we find, that he gets more than a bare sight of him, for he gets him in his arms and heart at once. 3. That a true believer loves Christ so well, that he would put him in his very heart. Simeon here takes Christ in his arms, and lays him in his bosom, as near his heart as he could bring him. So the spouse, Song 1:13: “A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.” O the mutual endearments betwixt Christ and believers; he

carries them as lambs in his bosom, and they carry the Lamb of God in their bosoms, Isa. 40:11. 4. That faith's embraces of Christ are so sweet, that they render the prospect of death not only easy, but desirable to the believer. Simeon, here, when he gets Christ in his arms, is content that the union betwixt his soul and body should be dissolved. But passing all these, the doctrine I design to discuss at the time is this:

DOCT. "That faith's embraces of Christ fill the mouth with praise." Simeon took him in his arms, and blessed God; where, as I told you, it was the arm of faith clasped about Christ, that filled him with praise and gratitude, taking him up as the Lord's Messiah.

In examining this doctrine, I shall, through divine assistance,

- I. Speak a little concerning that arm of faith which embraces Christ.
- II. Notice some of these songs of praise, which readily fill the believer's heart and mouth, when he gets Christ in his arms.
- III. Whence it is that faith's embraces of Christ thus fill the heart and mouth with praise.
- IV. Apply the whole.

I. As to the *first*, namely, *concerning that arm of faith which embraces Christ*, I would show, 1. What it is. 2. What sort of an arm it is. 3. How it embraces Christ.

For the *first*, I have not time at present to open up the nature of faith at any length; all I shall do, is only, in a few particulars, to show what it supposes and implies.

1. Then, it plainly supposes, that there is a gift or grant of Christ made to sinners, in the free offer and call of the gospel. Receiving necessarily supposes a giving; and to take what is not given, is but theft, robbery, or embezzlement. In John 6:32, Christ there says to a disorderly multitude, the greater part of whom were unbelievers, as is evident from the remainder of the chapter, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven:" where it is plain that giving and offering are much the same thing; with this difference only, that the gift or grant of Christ in the word to sinners is the ground upon which the offer is made. We read, that "God hath given the earth the sons of men;" that is, he made a grant of it to them,

to be used and possessed by them. And, by virtue of this grant, before the earth came to be fully peopled, when a man came to a piece of land, and set his foot upon it, he might warrantably use it as his own property and possession: and the foundation of this was, that God had *given*, or granted, *the earth to the sons of men*. In like manner, God had *gifted* or granted *his only begotten Son*, John 3:10. For what end? *That whosoever believeth in him*, or takes possession of him by faith, *should not perish but have everlasting life*. It is true, indeed, the eternal predestination, the purchase and application of redemption is particular only to the elect: but the revelation, gift and offer, is common to all the hearers of the gospel; insomuch that, as the great Mr. Rutherford expresses it, the reprobate have as valid a revealed warrant to believe as the elect have. Every man has an offer of Christ brought to his door, who lives within the compass of the joyful sound: and this offer comes as close home to him, as if he were pointed out by name. So that none have reason to say, ‘The call and offer is not to me, I am not warranted to embrace Christ;’ for it is *unto you*, O men, that we *call*, and our *voice is to the sons of man*, Prov. 8:4. We have God commission to preach this gospel, and to make offer of this Christ *to every creature* sprung of Adam, Mark 16:15; and the event of the publication of this gospel among sinners follows in the next words: “he that believeth *this gospel* shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.” No man ever died, or shall die under the drop of the gospel for lack of a full warrant to embrace a Saviour: no, no, sirs, your death and blood will be upon your own head; your unbelief will be the great ground of your condemnation. God will upbraid you at the great day with this, that you had Christ in your offer, and would not embrace him: “I called, but ye refused, I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded, therefore will I laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh,” Prov. 1:24,20.

2. This embracing of Christ supposes the knowledge of Christ; for a man, when he believes does not embrace a blind bargain. Now, there is a twofold knowledge that faith necessarily supposes; namely, a knowledge of ourselves, and a knowledge of Christ.

1st, I say it supposes the knowledge of ourselves, or, a conviction and discovery of that sin and misery, thralldom and bondage, we are reduced to, by the breach of the first Covenant. The law must be our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ. Without a revealing of sin and misery by the law, in less or more, the sinner will never flee to him, who is “the end of the law for righteousness.” The man, in this ease, is just like a mariner at sea, sailing upon a broken and shattered keel, not far from a great rock: so long as he considers his vessel to be good enough, or sufficient to carry him to land, he will still stay on board, refusing to

throw himself upon the rock for safety; but when the wind and waves beat upon the ship, and break her in pieces, then, and never till then, will he cast himself upon the rock. So is it here: while the sinner considers he can do well enough upon the broken foundation of a covenant of works, his own doings, and good intentions, he will never betake himself to Christ “the Rock of ages,” but when a hail-storm sweeps down the refuge of lies, and lets him see, that if he stay on board this ship of the law, he must inevitably sink into the bottom of hell, then, and never till then, will the man cry with the jailer, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The same we see in Paul, Rom. 7:9: “I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” And, Gal. 2:19: “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” Thus, I say, embracing of Christ necessarily supposes the knowledge and conviction of our lost condition by the law, or covenant of works.

2dly, It supposes or implies a knowledge of Christ, as the blessed remedy of God’s providing. And there is so much of this goes into the very nature of faith, that we find it frequently called by the name of *knowledge*, Isa. 53:11; John 17:3. And this knowledge of Christ is not a bare speculative knowledge of him, attained by external revelation, or common illumination: for there are many learned unbelievers: but it is an internal saving knowledge of him, which comes by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, accompanying the external discoveries of him in the gospel, which goes in to the nature of true faith: “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, *must* shine in our hearts, giving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. 4:6. He, as it were, cuts out a window in the man’s breast, which before was like a dungeon of hellish darkness; and makes a beam of saving, humbling, and captivating light to shine into it. And thus the man is “called out of darkness into a marvellous light.” And this light is called *the light of life*, because with it, and by it, a new principle of life is implanted in the soul: Eph. 2:1: “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”

3. This embracing of Christ bears in it the soul’s firm and steady assent to the revelation of the gospel concerning Christ; so that the man cannot but join together with Paul, I Tim. 1:15: “This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Now, this assent of the soul to the gospel revelation is not a bare historical assent, which leans only to the testimony of man; for thus reprobates may and do believe: but it is such an assent, as is founded upon the testimony of God, or his record concerning Christ in the gospel. Hence it is called a “believing the record of God,” a “setting to the seal that God is true.” Faith that is of a saving nature, will not venture upon any thing less than the credit

and authority of God himself: —*Thus saith the Lord*, is the ground and reason of the soul's assent. And this is a firmer basis than heaven and earth; for "the fashion of this world passeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever;" "righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." So that he will as soon cease to be God, as cease to make good his word, which is ratified by his oath; these being the "two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie."

4. Upon this, follows the receiving, embracing, or applying act of faith. Christ being known in the light of the word and Spirit, and the truth of the revelation concerning him assented to; the soul goes a degree further, and, as it were, takes him home into its arms and bosom, as a remedy every way suited to the soul's malady and misery. This embracing and appropriating act of faith is just, as it were, the soul's echo to the call and offer of the gospel. I offer him for *thy Saviour*, says God; and I embrace him as *my Saviour*, says faith: I offer him for *wisdom*, to thee who art a fool, says God; and I embrace him for *my wisdom*, says faith: I offer him for *thy righteousness* and *justification*, who art a condemned sinner, says God; and I embrace him as *the Lord my righteousness*, says faith: I offer him for *thy sanctification*, who art a polluted filthy sinner, says God; and I embrace him for *my sanctification*, says faith: I offer him for *thy redemption*, who art a lawful captive, says God; and I embrace him for *my redemption*, and *my all*, says faith. Thus, I say, the soul echoes to the voice of God in the gospel, when it believes, much like that, Zech. 13:9: "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." And this is what we call "the assurance of faith," or an "appropriating persuasion," by which the soul, as it were, takes possession and moves in, in Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase as his own, upon the ground of the gospel offer and promise. What lay before in common to all in the offer, the soul brings home to itself in particular; and, just like Simeon, takes Christ in its arms and bosom, saying, with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God." I do not say, that the first language of faith is, That 'Christ died for me,' or, 'I was elected from eternity:' no; but the language of faith is, 'God offers a slain and crucified Saviour to me, and I take the slain Christ for my Saviour; and in my taking or embracing of him as offered, I have ground to conclude, that I was elected, and that he died for me in particular, and not before.' I shall only add, that this appropriating act inseparably attends the knowledge and assent before mentioned; and that they are all jointly comprised in the general nature of saving faith; which I take up as an act of the whole soul, without restricting it to any one faculty, or distinction as to priority or posteriority of time.

Now, this saving faith, which I have been describing in its essential acts, is variously expressed in the sacred oracles of the scriptures of truth; from which fountain alone our understandings of it are to be drawn: “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,” Isa. 8:20.

1. Then, It is called *a receiving of Christ*: John 1:12: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:” Col. 2:6: “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” This expression of faith leads us to conceive of Christ under the notion of a gift, freely offered and presented to us in the gospel, and bears an appropriation in the very nature of it; for where a man receives a gift he takes it as his own, and it becomes his in possession.

2. It is sometimes expressed by a *resting* or “rolling ourselves on the Lord:” Psal. 37:5: “Commit thy way unto the Lord,” or, as it reads in the margin, “Roll thy way upon the Lord;” and ver. 7: “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.” Which expression may either allude to a poor weary man, who is about to sink under a load, his legs not able to bear him; he leans or rests himself upon a strong rock, which he is confident will not sink underneath. Faith in its justifying act, is not a working, but a resting grace. ‘O! says the poor soul, I am like to sink into the depths of hell, under the weight of my iniquities, which “have gone over my head, as a burden too heavy for me to bear:” but I lay my help where God has laid it; O! “this is my rest.”’ Hence he that believes is said to “enter into his rest.” Or, this resting of the soul on Christ may allude to one’s resting upon a bond, or good security granted to him by a responsible person; he takes it as security to himself, and rests on the fidelity of him that grants it. So, in believing, we rest upon the veracity of a promising God in Christ, as a sufficient security for the blessing promised.

3. It is called a “flying for refuge to the hope set before us,” Heb. 6:18. In which there is an allusion to the man-slayer under the law, who fled from “the avenger of blood.” The poor pursued man was not to turn aside to any of the cities of Israel; he was not to flee to his own home; yea, he was not to flee to the temple; and to offer sacrifice; but he was to flee straight to the city of refuge. So, in believing, the soul is never to rest in any thing on this side of Christ, who is “a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest:” the hail shall sweep away every other refuge, but as the man-slayer, when once within the gates of the city of refuge, was in such safety, that he could freely speak with the avenger of blood, without any manner of danger; so the soul that is by faith got under the covert of the blood and righteousness of Christ, is in such absolute safety, that it

dares speak to the law, and all its pursuers, saying with the apostle, Rom. 8:33,34, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died,” &c.

4. It is called a “submitting to the righteousness of God,” Rom. 10:3. A very strange expression! Shall it be thought submission for a condemned criminal to accept of pardon from his prince? or for a person that is stark naked, to accept of a garment? The expression plainly points out the arrogant pride of the heart of man. We are, as it were, mounted upon an imaginary throne of our own righteousness by the law, thinking, with Laodicea, that we are “rich, and stand in need of nothing,” disdain to be obliged to another for righteousness: but now, when a man believes, all these towering imaginations are levelled; he is emptied of himself, and made to “count all things but loss and dung, that he may be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith,” Phil. 3:8,9. The language of the soul, submitting to the righteousness of God, is that of the church, Isa. 45:24: “Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.”

5. It is called a “taking hold of God’s covenant,” Isa. 56:4. The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, is like a rope cast into a company of drowning men; God comes by his ministers, crying to sinking sinners, who are going down to the bottomless gulf of his wrath, *Take hold of my covenant*, and of him whom I have *given for a covenant of the people*; and *I will deliver you from going down to the pit*. Now, when a man believes, he, as it were, taketh hold of this rope of salvation, this covenant of grace and promise; and, like Jeremiah, when the cords were let down to the pit by Ebed-melech, puts them under his arm-holes, and lays his weight upon them. The poor soul, in this case, says with David, speaking of the covenant of grace, *This is all my salvation*; here will I lay the weight of my sinking and perishing soul.

6. It is called a *yielding ourselves unto the Lord*, 2 Chron. 30:8. Hezekiah, writing to the degenerate tribes, exhorts them to *yield themselves unto the Lord*; or, as it is in the Hebrew, *Give the hand unto the Lord*; alluding to men who have been at variance, when they come to an agreement, they strike hands one with another, in token of friendship. The great God, the offended Majesty of Heaven, comes, in a gospel dispensation, “stretching out his hand all the day long” to rebellious sinners, crying, *Behold me, behold me*: cast away your rebellious arms, and be at peace with me. Now, when a sinner believes, he, as it were, strikes hands with the Lord, according to that promise, Isa. 27:5: “Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.”

7. It is called an *opening of the heart to Christ*, Cant. v.2; Rev. 3:20; Acts 16:14. This expression imports, that as the sinner's heart is by nature shut and bolted against the Lord; so, when he believes, the *everlasting doors* of the understanding, will, and affections, are "lifted up to the Lord of hosts, the Lord mighty in battle,." Psal. 24:7.

8. It is sometimes called a *buying*, Isa. 55:1: "Buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Rev. 3:18: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," &c. This buying does not imply such an exchange of value, as if we were to give to God an equivalent for his grace; for it is a buying "without money, and without price;" it is a giving of poverty for riches, emptiness for fulness, deformity for beauty, guilt for righteousness, pollution for holiness, bondage for liberty; in a word, buying in Christ's market is nothing else but taking: Rev. 22:17: "Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely."

Many other expressions the Spirit of God makes use of in the word, to [represent] the nature of faith. Sometimes it is called, *the substance of things hoped for*, Heb. 11:1; because faith, as it were, realizes and substantiates the promise. Just like a man, looking to bonds, charters, or any other securities; he will say, 'There is my substance, and all my stock,' though they be but bits of paper. So the believer, when looking on Christ, his righteousness and fulness, as held forth in the free promise of the gospel, will be ready to say, 'There is my substance and everlasting all:' with David, he *rejoiceth in God's word* of promise, *as one that findeth great spoil*; yea, it is *better to him than gold, yea, than much fine gold*. Again; it is called, in the same verse, *the evidence of things not seen*. The word, in the original rendered *evidence*, signifies to convince to a demonstration. Faith, acting upon the promise, convinces the soul of the reality of things invisible, as if they were before him, and he saw them with his bodily eyes. And this sight of faith is not such a sight as Balaam got of Christ, when he said, "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh." He saw him by the spirit of prophecy, as the Redeemer of Israel; but not by the spirit of faith, as *his Redeemer*, as Job, chap. 19:25. Balaam saw him, without any personal interest; but Job saw him as his own Redeemer, with appropriation: "I know," says he, "that my Redeemer liveth." Again; in the 13th verse of the same chapter, faith is called an *embracing of the promises*, Heb. 11:13. The word in the original signifies a kindly salutation, or kissing; being an allusion to two dear friends, who, when they meet, clasp one another in their arms, in a most loving and affectionate manner. The grace of the promise embraces the soul, and then the soul embraces the promise, and hugs it and Christ in it, in his arms. The reverse of this is the case of the presumptuous hypocrite, who in some sort embraces the promise indeed;

but the special grace of the promise not having embraced him, he is like a man taking a tree in his arms; he embraces the tree, but not the tree him.

Again, faith is sometimes called an “eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of man.” John 6:53; because faith makes use of, and applies Christ for the life, nourishment, and sustenance of the soul; just as a man makes use of the meat and drink that it is set before him, for his bodily nourishment. Let a man have ever such a rich feast before him, yet he will inevitably starve, unless he walk over to it, and make use of it; so, without faith’s application of Christ and his fulness, we inevitably die and perish. And O how sad to perish in the midst of plenty!

Lastly, Faith is called a “trusting in the name of the Lord,” Isa. 50:10, and 26:3. We all know what it is to trust in a man of honesty and integrity. When he passes his word, we make no doubt, and have no hesitation concerning his performing what he has promised; so faith takes the promise, and trusts the veracity of the Promiser; as it is said of Abraham, Rom. 4:20, “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.” The perfections of God, such as his power, holiness, goodness, but especially his veracity, are pawned in the promise, as grounds of trust. Hence we are to trust in his NAME: and when we trust in him, and stay ourselves upon him, we are still to take him up as our God in Christ; for we can never trust him, while we take him up as an enemy.

The *second* thing proposed, for opening up the first general head in the method, was to give you some of the qualities of this arm of faith.

1. It is a leaning and a staying arm: Cant. 8:5: “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” Isa. 26:3: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.” It is the office of faith to underprop the soul, when it is ready to be overwhelmed with the burden of sin and sorrow, darkness and desertion: Psal. 27:13: “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the had of the living.” It leans and stays itself on him who is “the Strength of Israel, *even* the man of God’s right hand, whom he hath made strong for himself.” And thus it bears up the soul under the heaviest pressures.

2. It is a winning and gaining arm. The apostle, Phil. 3:8,9, speaks of *winning Christ* and *being found in him*. And it is said of the wise merchant, that *he went and sold all that he had*, that he might *buy* or win *the pearl of great price*; and this pearl can be won no otherwise but by receiving it, John 1:12. Faith is such a winning grace, that it is ever taking, ever receiving out of Christ’s fulness, *grace for grace*; it digs into the Rock of ages, and makes up the poor soul with

unsearchable riches; it maintains a commerce with heaven, travels to the land afar off, and returns richly freighted and loaded with the commodities of that better country.

3. It is a very wide and capacious arm. It is not little that will fill the arm of faith: the whole world, and all the fulness thereof, cannot fill the arm of faith: no, no; it flings them away like dung, that it may get its arms filled with a God in Christ: "I count all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Phil. 3:8. I may add, that heaven, and all the glories of Immanuel's land, bear no bulk in the arm of faith without Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells: Psal. 73:25: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

4. It is a most tenacious arm; its motto may be, **HOLDFAST**. As the arm of faith is wide, and takes in much; so it keeps, and holds fast what it gets: Cant. 3:4: "I held him," says the spouse, "and would not let him go." Faith is such a tenacious grace, that it will wrestle with an omnipotent God, and refuse to yield to him when he seems to shake himself loose of its gripes, as we see in the case of Jacob, Gen 32:24, and downward. There Jacob gets a gripe by faith of the Angel of the covenant: the Angel says to him, "Let me go, Jacob." A very strange word, for the Creator to become a supplicant to his own creature! Well, what says Jacob's faith to this proposal?" "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." As if he had said, 'Let the day break, and let it pass on, let the night come, and let the day break again; it is all one; lean Jacob and the living God shall not part without the blessing.' To this purpose is that of the prophet, Hos. 12:3,4: "By his strength," namely, by the strength of faith in prayer, "he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him." O sirs! try to follow the example of Jacob, and you shall be "fed with the heritage of Jacob" your "father," Isa. 58:14. Thus, I say, faith is a most gripping and tenacious arm. The first grip that faith takes of Christ is so fast, that it never lets go of him again through eternity: it unites the soul to Christ; and the union is so close and intimate through faith, that the man becomes *one body* and *one spirit* with him, and so indissoluble, as that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, shall *ever* be able to separate from the love of God in Christ Jesus."

5. Hence it follows, that faith is a very bold and confident arm. It has a great deal of *assurance* in it; for it will maintain its claim to Christ, upon the ground of the new covenant, even when hell and earth, sense and reason, and all seems to be against it; it will trust in the name of the Lord, and stand firm upon its God in covenant, even when the poor soul walks in the darkness of desertion, in

the darkness of temptation, in the darkness of affliction, or even in the dark valley of the shadow of death. Abraham's faith had much opposition to grapple with, when he got the promise of Isaac, and in him of the promised seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; yet such was the confidence and assurance of his faith, that he *staggered not at the promise*. The language of faith is, "When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness," Mic. 7:8,9. Yet I would not be here mistaken, as if the poor believer did not lay hold of Christ and the promise with a tottering and trembling hand; nay, the believer, through the prevalence of unbelief, is many times brought so low, as to cry with the psalmist, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah." Psal. 77:7-9. But let it be remembered, that this was not his faith, but his *infirmity*, through prevailing unbelief, which made him thus to stagger: for, let faith but get rid of unbelief, let it get up its head, and allow it to speak its proper language, its dialect will be, *Abba, Father*, Rom. 8:15; and, "Doubtless, thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting."

6. It is a very patient and waiting arm; for "he that believeth shall not make haste," Isa. 28:16. Faith, although it firmly believes the accomplishment of the promise, yet it will not limit the Holy One of Israel as to the time of its accomplishment: "I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him," Isa. 8:17. "The vision is for an appointed time; (and therefore, says faith,) though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry," Hab. 2:3. Faith will not draw rash or desperate conclusions, because the Lord hides or defers his visits: no; but it looks to God's word of promise, and grounds its confidence there, saying with the church, "I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me," Mic. 7:7.

7. Faith is a feeding arm; it feeds upon the carcass of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" and thus, like Samson, gets its "meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong." Hence, as you heard, it is called an *eating of the flesh* and a *drinking of the blood of Christ*: and in this view Christ is presented to us in the sacrament of the supper, *Take, eat; this is my body*. There was a part of the sacrifices under the law reserved for food to the priests, when the rest was burnt upon the altar: believers are spiritual priests to God, and they live upon the altar, and that blessed "passover that was sacrificed for us."

8. It is not an idle, but a working arm. Indeed, in its justifying act it is not a working, but only a taking, or a resting arm: it is like the beggar's hand, that takes the alms, without working for it. In justification, faith is a passive or recipient kind of an instrument; but, in sanctification, it is an active or an efficient kind of instrument. It is such an active arm in sanctification, that it "purifies the heart," and actuates and animates all the other graces of the Spirit; it "works by love," it works by repentance, it works by hope, it works by patience, it works by obedience; and "faith without works is dead, as the body without the spirit is dead." In a word, the whole of gospel obedience, is "the obedience of faith;" and the obedience that flows not from faith is but "dead works," which cannot be acceptable to a "living God."

9. Faith is a fighting and warlike arm: In Heb. 11:34, it is said of the worthies there, that they by faith, "waxed valiant in fight:" yea, it is not only a fighting, but a victorious arm; for it "puts to flight the armies of the aliens." It is by faith leaning on the Arm of Omnipotence, that the believer's bow abides in its strength, and the arms of his hands become strong, to break bows of steel in pieces. By faith we quench the fiery darts of hell, and trample upon the powers of darkness; by faith we overcome the world, and set the moon under our feet. Yes, this gallant grace of faith will take up the spoils of Christ's victory over sin and Satan, hell and death, and triumph in his triumphs, even while it is in the field of battle, and seemingly overcome by the enemy. "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." My Head and General, says faith, has overcome, and I have already overcome in him; for "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us," Rom. 8:37.

10. *Lastly*, Faith is a saving arm: "He that believeth shall be saved." There is an inseparable connexion established, by the ordination of Heaven, between faith and salvation, John. 3:16: "Whosoever believeth, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Although, indeed, there is no connexion of causality, yet there is an undoubted connexion of order. Faith cannot but carry salvation along with it, seeing it takes up Christ the salvation of God in its arms, as you see Simeon did.

The *third* thing proposed here was, to inquire how this arm of faith embraces Christ? In general, I answer, it embraces him just as God offers him in the gospel. There is a manifest proportion betwixt God's offer, and faith's reception of Christ; which I shall illustrate in the four following particulars:—

1. Christ is *freely* offered in the gospel, Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17; so faith embraces him as the free gift of God. There is a natural propensity in the heart of man, to give something or other of our own, by way of exchange or equivalent, for

Christ, and the blessings of his purchase. Proud nature cannot think of being so much beholden to God, as to take Christ and salvation from him for nothing at all; and therefore it would always be bringing in this or the other qualification, as a price in its hand to fit it for Christ; I must be so penitent, so humble, so clean and holy before I come to Christ, and then I will be welcome, he will pardon and save me. But, sirs, whatever you may think of it, this is but a remnant of the old covenant of works, and all one as if a man should say, I must first heal myself before I go to the physician; I will first wash myself clean, before I go to the “fountain opened up for sin and for uncleanness.” Beware of this, for it is a secret subverting of the order and method which God has established in the covenant of grace; this being the very money and price which he forbids us to bring to the market of free grace. Faith argues at another rate in its embracing of Christ: ‘O!’ says the poor soul, ‘I am a diseased sinner from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head; and this qualifies me for the Physician of souls: I am a polluted sinner, black, like the Ethiopian, spotted like the leopard; and therefore I will go to the fountain: I am naked; and therefore I will take the white raiment offered me, to cover the shame of my nakedness: I am blind; and therefore I will take the eye-salve, which recovers sight to the blind.’ Thus, I say, faith embraces Christ as he is freely offered.

2. Christ is *fully* and *wholly* offered in the gospel; and accordingly faith embraces him wholly without dividing him. I claim, indeed, that the first flight of faith is to Christ as a Saviour, Christ as priest, fulfilling the law, satisfying justice, and thereby bringing in everlasting righteousness; this being the only thing that can answer the present strait and necessity of the soul, under the awful anticipations of vindictive justice and wrath; and therefore thither it flees for refuge in the first act of believing. But now, although faith at first fixes upon Christ as a priest; yet at the same time it embraces him as a prophet, submitting to his instruction, and subjects itself to him as a king, receiving the law from his mouth: ‘O!’ says the soul, “I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;” but this Saviour “has pity on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way:” he opens the book, and looses the seven seals thereof;” and therefore I will sit down at his feet, and receive the whole revelation of the mind and will of God from him: I am a poor captive and vassel of hell; “Other lords have had dominion over me, but,” now “I will make mention of his name:” he is “my Judge, my Lawgiver, and my King,” even he that “saves me.” Thus, I say, the arm of faith embraces a whole Christ. ‘There is nothing of Christ,’ says the soul, ‘that I can bear going without; I must have him all, and have him all as mine own, as my Prophet, my Priest, and my King. And herein the faith of the hypocrite, or temporary believer, comes short of the faith of God’s elect. The

hypocrite, halves Christ, or else inverts the order of his office, in his way of receiving him: either he receives him as a Saviour, only to keep him out of hell, but waives the acceptance of him as a King to rule him; or else he professedly subjects himself to Christ's authority as a King and a Lawgiver, hoping, upon that score, that Christ will save him, by his blood and righteousness, as a priest; and thus endeavours to make up the defects of his imperfect obedience; which is, upon the matter, to "put a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, *whereby* the rent is made worse."

3. God gives Christ *cordially* and *affectionately* in the gospel: his very heart, as it were, goes out after sinners, in the call and offer of it. It is not possible to conceive any thing more affectionate, than the word in which he calls to sinners: Ezek. 33:11: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!" Hos. 11:8: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together." Isa. 55:1-3: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Now, I say, as God offers Christ most affectionately and cordially, in like manner does faith embrace him. He embraces a whole Christ, with the whole heart and soul; the love, joy, delight, and complacency of the soul, overflows upon him as their very centre of rest: and these affections, like so many springs of gospel obedience, set all the members of the body at work in his service; so that the head will study for him, the hand work for him, the feet run his errands, and the tongue be ready to plead his cause.

4. Christ is offered *particularly*, to *every* man. There is not a soul hearing me, but, in God's name, I offer Christ to him, as if called by name and surname. Now, as the offer is particular to every individual person, so faith embraces Christ with particular application to the soul itself. When I embrace a Saviour, I do not embrace for salvation to another man; no, but I embrace him as *my* Saviour, for salvation to *my* own soul in particular. Beware, my friends, of a general, non-specific faith, abjured in our National Covenant as a branch of Popery. A general persuasion of the mercy of God in Christ, and of Christ's ability and willingness

to save all that come to him, will not do the business; no, devils and reprobates may, and do actually believe it. There must therefore of necessity be a persuasion and belief of this, with particular application thereof to a man's own soul; for if the mercy of God in Christ be offered to every man in particular, then surely faith, which, as I was saying, is but the echo of the soul to the gospel call, must embrace Christ, and the mercy of God in him, with particular application to itself, otherwise it does not answer God's offer; consequently, cannot be of a saving nature. So much for the *first* general head proposed in the prosecution of the doctrine.

II. The *second* thing proposed was, to *take notice of some of these songs, which readily the soul has in its mouth, when, like Simeon, it gets Christ embraced in the arms of faith.* We are said to be "filled with all joy and peace in believing;" by faith in an unseen Christ, the soul is replenished *with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* And when this is the soul's case, it cannot but bless God, as Simeon did, and express its heart in these or the like songs of praise.

1. It cannot but bless him for electing and everlasting love. Faith's embraces of Christ help the soul to trace the streams of divine love to their fountain head, and to read its own name in the book of life, among the living in Jerusalem. 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that ever I, wretched I, miserable I, should have been upon God's heart before the foundations of the world were laid: "Glory to God in the highest," who hath "drawn me with loving-kindness," by which I know that he "hath loved me with an everlasting love."'

2. The soul, in such a case, cannot but bless God for Christ, and redeeming love through him, saying with the apostle, "Thanks be unto him for his unspeakable gift." Glory to him in the highest, that "unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." And then when the soul views the glorious retinue of blessings that come along with Christ, it cannot shun to join issue with the apostle in his triumphant doxology, Eph. 1:2, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." And there are these few, among innumerable blessings, that come along with Christ, for which the soul will readily bless God, in the case mentioned.

1st, 'O blessed be God,' will the soul say, 'that in Christ he is become *my God, even my own God.* I was once *without God in the world;* but O what a happy turn is this! Now I can view him in Christ, and say, "He is my God, my Father,

and the Rock of my salvation; the portion of my cup: *and therefore* the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.”

2dly, ‘O blessed be God,’ will the soul say, ‘that in Christ the fiery tribunal is turned into a mercy-seat by his obedience and death. The law and justice having got a complete satisfaction, a way is made for the empire of sovereign grace: so that now “grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord,” Rom. 5:21. And as it is the will of God that grace should reign, so it is the desire of my soul, to make this name of his to be remembered to all generations. O let grace wear the crown, and sway the sceptre for ever; and let all the hallelujahs of the higher house be “to the praise of the glory of his grace.”’

3dly, ‘O blessed be God,’ will the soul say, ‘that in Christ he has “blotted out all mine iniquities, as a cloud, and as a thick cloud.” There was a cloud of sin pregnant with wrath hovering above my head; but in Christ I see it scattered: “We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. And therefore, “Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.”’

4thly, ‘O blessed be God,’ will the soul say, ‘that in Christ I am blessed with an *everlasting* and law-abiding *righteousness*. Christ, my ever-blessed Surety, was *made under the law*, and has *magnified it, and made it honourable*; and *the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake*; and in him, and through him, *the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in me*: and, therefore, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels,” Isa. 61:10.

5thly, ‘O blessed be God,’ will the soul say, ‘that in Christ he is become a *Father of the fatherless*, and blessed me with the blessing of adoption and sonship. I may seal it, from my experience, that “in him the fatherless findeth mercy.” I was like an outcast infant and helpless orphan, but the everlasting Father took me up, and “gave a place and a name in his house, and within his walls, better than of sons and of daughters, even an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon me, that I should be called a son of God,” 1 John 3:1.

6thly, ‘O glory to God,’ will the soul say, ‘for the open door of “access into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” The door was once barred against me and all Adam’s posterity, by the breach of the first covenant; but in Christ it is again opened, so that we may “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain

mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” An Incarnate Deity is now become the way to God and glory.’

I might tell you of many other blessings that the soul is ready to bless God for, when it gets Christ in the arms of faith; but I will not dwell on this. I conclude this head by referring you to two or three Scriptural songs which will readily occur in such a case. The first you have, 1 Pet. 1:3,4: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” &c. Another you have, Rom. 8:33, to the end of the chapter: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?” &c. A third you have, 1 Cor. 15:55,56: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” &c. Another, with which I conclude this head, is that which concludes the Bible, Rev. 22:20: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

III. The *third* thing proposed was, to *inquire whence it is that faith’s embraces of Christ thus fill the mouth with praise?*

Ans. 1. This flows from the certainty that is in faith. Faith is not a doubting grace; no, doubts and jealousies vanish before it, as the clouds and darkness of the night vanish at the appearance of the sun. And the certainty of faith flows from the stability of these foundations upon which it is built, which are more firm than the pillars of heaven, and the foundations of the earth. It builds upon the word of God, the oath of God, the blood of God, the righteousness of God, the power of God, the veracity of God: and seeing it builds upon such immoveable foundations, how can it miss to have a certainty in it proportioned, in some measure, to the grounds upon which it stands? And hence it comes, that it fills the mouth with praise. Let news be ever so good, yet if we have no certainty in our belief of them, it exceedingly mars our joy and comfort. But as regards the glad tidings of the gospel, they are no whispering uncertain reports; no, it is God, that cannot lie, who speaks: and thence comes the certainty of faith.

2. This flows from the applying and appropriating nature of faith; which I hinted at already. Let news be ever so true, though ever so great and good, yet if we have no interest or concern in them, it mars the sweetness and comfort of them. Tell a poor man of mountains of gold and silver, what relief will that afford him, if he has no access to it, or interest in it? But tell him, that all these treasures are his, and that he has the owner’s warrant and command to take and use them as his own, this will make him rejoice indeed. Tell a hungry and starving man of a

rich feast or banquet; what is that to him, if he be not allowed to taste it? Tell a naked man, exposed to the injuries of the wind and weather, of fine robes and excellent garments; what will it avail him, if they be not for him, or for his use? But tell the hungry man that the feast is for him; and the naked man that the clothing is for him, this will create joy and triumph. So, here, the gospel report does not tell us of a Saviour and salvation that we have no interest in; no, it tells us, that to us *is the word of this salvation sent; that unto us is this child born, unto us is this son given:* that he is “made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;” and that, as the great Trustee of Heaven, he “received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also.” Now, faith, accordingly, applies all these good news, this Saviour. and his whole salvation, to itself in particular. And hence it comes, that it fills the heart with joy, and the tongue with praise.

3. This flows from that perceptible assurance of God’s love, and of grace and salvation, which commonly follows upon believing; according to what you have, Eph. 1:13: “After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” There is a certainty of sense, which very frequently accompanies or follows upon the certainty of faith, as a natural fruit of it; and yet is not of the nature and essence of it, because there may be true faith where there is not this perception or reflex assurance of grace and salvation. The certainty of faith is built upon the word of God, the record of and the promise of God, which is a believing because God hath spoken: Psal. 60:6,7, compared. God had made a promise of the kingdom to David, “God hath spoken in his holiness,” says he, “I will rejoice;” and, in the faith of this word of promise, he speaks with such certainty, as if he were already in possession, “Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine,” &c. But now the certainty of sense is a knowing that we have believed, or the soul’s reflecting upon its own act of believing. The certainty of faith is like the certainty that a man has of his money in a good and sufficient bond, or the certainty that a man has of his estate, by a good and sufficient charter; he rests upon his bonds and charters as good securities to him. But the certainty of sense is like the certainty that a man has of his money, when he is handling it with his fingers, or taking in his rents. By the certainty of faith, Abraham believed, without staggering, because he had God’s word of promise for it; but by the certainty of sense, he knew it, when he saw Sarah delivered of his son Isaac, and got him in his arms. Now, I say, faith commonly produces this sensible assurance, sweet and reviving experiences of the Lord’s love to our souls: and hence it comes, that it fills the mouth with praise.

IV. The *fourth* thing was, the *application* of the doctrine. And the *first* use shall be of *information*. This doctrine informs us,

1. Of the excellency of the grace of faith. It cannot but be an excellent grace, because it embraces precious Christ. Hence it is, that God puts such an estimate upon it, that he cares for nothing we do, if that be lacking: "Without faith it is impossible to please God: Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." Suppose it were possible for a man to attain such a pitch of morality, as to be, touching the law, blameless; yet all his obedience, moral and religious, stands for a zero in God's reckoning; yea, is like the *cutting off a dog's neck*, and the *offering of swine's blood* upon God's altar, if faith be lacking. Thus, then, I say, faith is an excellent grace, of absolute necessity in order to our acceptance before God. Only let it be here carefully remembered, that it is not the act of faith, but its glorious and ever-blessed object, Jesus Christ, whom it embraces that renders us acceptable to God. In point of acceptance, faith renounces its own actings, and looks for acceptance only "in the Beloved:" it "rejoiceth in Christ Jesus" only, and has "no confidence in the flesh."

2. See from this doctrine what a happy and privileged person the believer is. He gets Christ the Lamb of God in the embraces of his soul! And O what can the most enlarged heart or soul of man wish for more! This was the *one thing* that David *desired*, Psal. 27:4. We read of one in the gospel that said to Christ, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked;" to which Christ answered, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it," Luke 11:27,28. And who are they that hear the word of God and keep it, but believers, who have him "formed in their hearts," and clasped in the arms of faith? For *he that thus hath the Son, hath life*. And, concerning such, I may say, as Moses said concerning Israel, Deut. 33:29: "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord!" Notice the expression, they are a people already saved, they *have everlasting life*. That day that Christ comes into the heart, the salvation of God comes, as it is said to Zaecheus, "This day is salvation come to thy house."

3. See, from this doctrine, the true way of joy and comfort. Perhaps there may be some poor soul going mourning without the sun, saying, "Oh that I were as in months past." Once in a day I thought I could say, "The candle of the Lord shined upon my head;" but, alas! the scene is now altered; "the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me:" how shall I recover my previous joy in the Lord? Well, here is the way to it; go forth out of yourselves, by a direct act of faith; take Christ anew, in the embraces of your souls, upon the free call and offer of the gospel; and, with Simeon, you shall be made to *bless God*. It is the wreck of the comfort of the generality of God's people, in our day, that they continue poring within themselves, upon their emotional states, their graces, their

experiences, their attainments, without going forth, by faith, to the fulness of a Redeemer for relief. And while we do so, we are just like mariners at sea: while they sail among shallow waters, near the shore, they are always afraid of striking upon rocks, or running upon sands; because they lack deepness of water; but when they launch forth into the main ocean, they are delivered of these fears, being carried far above rocks and sands: so while the believer continues among the shallow waters of his graces, duties, experiences, and attainments, he cannot miss to be harassed with continual fears, because the waters of divine grace are but ebb, while we stay there; but when by faith we launch out into that full ocean of grace that is in Christ, then fears, doubts, and perplexities vanish; the soul is carried up above all these, being *strong*; not in the created grace that is in itself, but “in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead.” So then, I say, if you would surmount your fears, and recover your joy and comfort in the Loud, study to “live by faith upon the Son of God;” for we are “filled with joy and peace in believing.”

4. From this doctrine we may gather what a lightsome place heaven will be, where the soul shall live in Christ’s embraces for ever. If the believer’s heart be so refreshed when he gets Christ embraced by faith, what overpowering floods of joy must flow upon his soul, when he comes to immediate fruition, where no clouds shall ever impede the rays of the Sun of righteousness from him, through an endless eternity! No wonder, though sometimes the believer break forth into such longing expressions, when he thinks of immediate enjoyment, as that of Paul: “I desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.”

Use *2d*, may be of *trial*. Sirs, you have been in the temple this day; I would ask, Have you seen the Lord’s Messiah there? Have you got him, like Simeon, in the arms and embraces of faith? O! say you, how shall I know if I ever had him in my arms! For answer, take these following things as marks:—

1. If ever you have embraced Christ, Christ has embraced you first; for there is a mutual embracing betwixt Christ and the believer, and it begins on Christ’s side; he first lays hold of the soul by his Spirit, before the soul lays hold of him by faith: Phil. 3:12: “I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” ‘O!’ will the soul say, ‘I was wandering, like a lost sheep, among the mountains of vanity; I had gone into a far country, with the prodigal, and never had a thought of Christ, till he, by his sovereign grace, seized and drew me with the cords of victorious love and grace, and then my heart grasped and apprehended him.’ Never a soul yet came really to believe in Christ, but will be ready to own, that it was not free will, but free grace that

began the work: “No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.”

2. If ever you had Christ really in the embraces of faith, you have been made to quit the embraces of other lovers: “Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?” Particularly, have you been made to part with the law as a husband? Rom. 7:4: “Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to *a better husband*, even to him who is raised from the dead.” O sirs! it is a harder business than many are aware of, to make a divorce between a sinner and the law, so as to make him renounce all hopes of salvation and righteousness from that quarter. It is much easier to pull his lusts out of his arms, than to pull the law, as a husband, out of his embraces. And the reason of this is plain, because the law gives a promise of life to them that obey it, “He that doth these things, shall live in them;” which sin and lust cannot do, in regard they carry the stamp of hell and wrath visibly upon them, to the eye of a natural conscience. So that it is much easier to convince a man that his sin is an evil thing, than to convince him that his righteousness is so: hence Christ tells the Pharisees, those self-righteous wretches, “that publicans and harlots *should* enter into the kingdom of God before them.” Publicans and harlots, and such sort of persons, lie more open to the sharp arrows of conviction, than self-righteous persons, who make, as it were, a barricade of the law itself, and their obedience to it, behind which they lie, entrenched and fortified, against all the curses and threatenings of the law that are denounced against them; they still take the law for a friend, while they obey it as well as they can, never dreaming that nothing will satisfy the law, but an obedience that is every way complete. But now, I say, if ever you have embraced Christ, you have been made to part with the law as a covenant, and with your own righteousness by the law, as “filthy rags,” saying with Paul, “I through the law am dead to the law.” At the same time that the soul quits the embraces of the law as a husband, it parts with “other lovers” also. The first view of Christ by faith, makes all the twinkling stars of created enjoyments to vanish and disappear; so that the soul joins issue with David, Psal. 73:25, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.”

3. If ever Christ was in the embrace of thy soul, thou mayest know it by the desirable concomitants and effects thereof. I shall not stand upon them; only, in so many words. Your estimate of Christ will be raised; for “unto you which believe he is precious.” Your love to him will be inflamed; for “faith worketh by love.” Your joy and peace will be increased; for “believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” Heart-holiness will be promoted; for “faith

purifieth the heart.” And, in a word, your souls will make their boast in him; for “in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.”

Use 3*d*, shall be of *exhortation* to all in general. Sirs, before we part this evening, I would fain have every soul hearing me, going home with the great Messiah, the Son of God, in the arms and embraces of their souls; and then I am sure you would go away, blessing God that ever you come here. We must deal with you as reasonable creatures, and persuade you in a moral way: and when we are so doing, look up to God for the concurring efficacy of his Holy Spirit, whose prerogative it is to persuade and enable you to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to you in the gospel. And therefore, by way of motive, consider,

1. The absolute need you have of this Christ, whom we offer to you. Without him you are “condemned already;” without him you are “without God in the world;” God is angry with you every day; the law and justice of God, like the avenger of blood, is pursuing you. And therefore, O sinners, flee to a Saviour, “Turn ye to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.”

2. Consider the matchless excellency of that Saviour whom we call you to embrace. Angels and men are at an everlasting stand to speak of his worth and glory; he is best known by his own and his Father’s testimony concerning him; and if you would know the record of God concerning him, search the scriptures, for these are they that testify of him: it is in this glass that “we behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” I despair, that ever a sinner will embrace Christ, till there be an up-taking of his personal excellency, as Immanuel God-man. There is a seeing of the Son, which, in order of nature, although not in order of time, goes before the soul’s believing in him, John 6:40.

3. Consider the ability and sufficiency of this Saviour whom we call you to embrace. Take the Father’s testimony of his ability, Psal. 89:20: “I have laid help upon one that is mighty.” Take his own testimony, Isa. 63:1: “I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” Take the Spirit’s testimony, in the mouth of the apostle Paul, Heb. 7:25; declaring him “able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him.” Thus, you have the “three that bear record in heaven,” attesting the sufficiency of this Saviour. O, then, “set to *your* seal, that God is true, *by* believing the record that God gives of his Son;” for if you do not, your unbelief gives the lie to a whole Trinity, 1 John 5:10,11.

4. Consider that this sufficient Saviour is *the sent of God*. This is a designation given to Christ thirty or forty times in the gospel according to John, and the ordinary argument with which Christ persuades sinners to embrace and

receive him. And nothing could have greater influence than this designation, if the weight of it were but duly weighed. O consider in what quality and capacity his Father has sent him: shall not God's Ambassador-extraordinary get a hearing among a company of condemned rebels? He is sent as a Redeemer to liberate captives; and shall not captives embrace him? He is sent as a Surety; and will not debtors and bankrupts embrace a surety? He is sent as a Physician; and will not the wounded and diseased sinner embrace him, and his healing balm? &c.

5. Consider, that his heart and his arms are open and ready to embrace all that are willing to be embraced by him. O, may the soul say, fain would I embrace him, but I doubt of his willingness to embrace me. I tell you good news; he is more willing to embrace you by far, than you are to be embraced by him. He says he is willing and you may believe his word, for he is, "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness;" and he says, that he will cast out none that come to him: he swears he is willing, and will you not believe his oath? Ezek. 33:11: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live." Pray tell me, why did he engage from eternity, and voluntarily give his hand to the Father in the council of peace, saying, "Lo, I come—I delight to do thy will, O my God?" Why did he assume the nature of man, and the sinless infirmities of it? Why did he who is the great Lawgiver, subject himself to his own *Law*? Why did he who is the Lord of life and glory, submit to the stroke of death ignominiously upon a cross? Why does he send out his ministers to you, with call upon call? Why does he wait all the day long, saying, "Behold me, behold me?" Why does he confront you on this matter? Why is he grieved at the obstinacy of your hearts, if he be not willing that you should embrace him? For the Lord's sake, therefore, consider these things, and do not "reject the counsel of God against yourselves."

6. Consider what a glorious succession and retinue of blessings come along with him, when he is embraced in the arms of faith: such as pardon of sin; Heb. 8:12; peace with God, Rom. 5:1; a complete justifying righteousness, Rom. 8:3,4; adoption and sonship, John 1:12; sanctification, both in the root and fruit of it, I Cor. 1:30; saving knowledge of God, and the mysteries of his covenant, 2 Cor. 4:6; the crown of eternal glory at last, John 3:16. All these might be particularly enlarged on; but I will not continue further, but rather proceed to remove some objections that some may make against complying with this exhortation.

Object. 1. Some poor soul may be ready to Say, ‘Gladly would I embrace Christ, with my very soul; but still I entertain a suspicion of my right and warrant to meddle with the unspeakable gift of God; he is such a great God, that I am afraid it would be but presumption in me to attempt the embracing of him.’ Now, for removing any suspicions of this nature, I shall lay before you a few of these warrants, upon which a lost sinner may receive and embrace this Saviour.

1. Let desperate and absolute necessity be your warrant. You must either do or die; there is no medium: “He that believeth, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.” Do not halt to dispute the matter; there is no time, no, not one moment of time, in which a man is allowed to toss this question in his breast, after the revelation of Christ to him in the gospel; Shall I believe, or shall I not? Or, if you will dispute the matter, will you argue as the Samaritan lepers did: “If we sit still here, we perish; but if we go into the camp of the Assyrians, peradventure we shall live.” So you, ‘If we sit still in this sinful and miserable condition, without God, and without Christ in the world, we unavoidably perish; but if we throw ourselves into the arms of a Redeemer, and upon the mercy of God in him, beyond peradventure we shall be saved.’ And therefore, I say, let absolute necessity be your warrant.

2. Venture to embrace this Saviour in the arms of faith, upon the warrant of the very design of his Incarnation. Why is there a Saviour provided? Why was he manifested in the flesh? Upon what errand was he sent into the world, but “to seek and save that which was lost?” Well, since this is the very design of God in giving a Saviour, that sinners might be saved by him; what can be more agreeable to him, or his Father that sent him, than that a lost sinner should embrace and receive him?

3. Let the revelation of this incarnate Deity, in the glorious gospel, be your warrant to embrace and receive him: a simple exhibition of a Saviour, without any more, is enough to induce a sinner to believe in him. Why was the brazen serpent in the wilderness lifted up on the pole, but that every one in the camp of Israel, who were stung with the fiery serpents, might look to it, and be healed? The very lifting up of the brazen serpent was a sufficient warrant to any man to look to it: so the Son of man, being lifted up on the pole of the everlasting gospel, warrants every man to believe in him, John 3:14,15.

4. Besides the revelation of Christ, you have a full, free, and unhampered offer of him in the external call of the gospel; and this directed to every one, without exception, Isa. 55:1-3; Rev. 22:17; Mark 16:15; Prov. 8:4. Sirs, we offer a Christ to you, and the whole fulness of grace and glory, merit and Spirit, that is in

him, as the free gift of God, without the money and price of your own works and qualifications; if you bring any such price, to make a purchase of the pearl of great price, you shall lose him for ever: God loves to give his Christ freely, but he scorns to receive any thing for him. Let this then be your warrant, that Christ is gifted and offered of God in this gospel: and let it be remembered, that in the matter of a gift, there is no difference between man and man; the poorest, as well as the richest, may receive a gift presented to him: a condemned malefactor has as good a right to receive a gift presented to him by the king, as the greatest favourite in the court; his being a guilty criminal is no prejudice at all to his receiving a gift; yea, his being so qualifies him for receiving the pardon. So, here, Christ's being the gift of God, freely offered and presented, warrants the sinner to receive him, without respect to any qualifications but of that of his being a sinner. Hunger is the best disposing qualification for meat, nakedness fits a man for clothing, &c. And that Christ seeks no other qualifications is evident from his counsel to Laodicea, Rev. 3:17,18: "Thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich; and white raiment that thou mayst be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayst see."

5. You have not only an offer of Christ, but an express command requiring you to embrace him, for your warrant: 1 John 3:23: "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." Sirs, it is not a thing left optional to you, to embrace Christ or not, as you please; no, you are concluded under a law, fenced with the severest penalty; "he that believeth not, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." The unbelieving sinner counteracts the authority of Heaven; and thus rushes upon "God's neck, upon the thick bosses of his buckler." You have no reason to doubt but that the command of believing is to you; for if you were not commanded to believe, your unbelief could not be your sin: "Where no law is, there is no transgression." You do not doubt, but you are commanded by the word of God, to read, hear, pray, sanctify the Sabbath, and to perform the other duties of the moral law; and because they are commanded, you aim at obedience. Now, believing is as peremptorily enjoined, yea rather more than any other, duty, inasmuch as the successful and acceptable performance of all other duties depends upon it. And, therefore, do not stand disputing your warrant, against the express authority of Heaven.

6. Besides the command of God, you have a promise of welcome to encourage you in believing: John 6:37: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise

cast out.” John 3:16: “Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” But, say you, these promises may be to others, and not to me. I answer, The promise is endorsed to you, directed to you, in the external call and dispensation of the gospel, Acts 2:39. There the apostle is preaching to a company of men, whose hands had lately been dipped in the blood of the Son of God. He calls them to faith and repentance. By what argument does he enforce the exhortation? Why, he tells them, “The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off; even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Where, it is plain, the promise is extended, first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles, who at that time were afar off; and then indefinitely both to Jew and gentile, to whom the call of the gospel should reach; the external call, which is only here intended, howsoever the Spirit of the Lord did internally concur, being the alone foundation upon which the promise is to be received, and not the internal call of one person, which can never be a warrant of believing to another. And, therefore as the apostle said to them, so say I to you, in the name of God *The promise is unto you*, I mean, the promise of welcome; *Whosoever of you believeth, shall not perish*. This promise is not made to believers exclusively of others, but to every one that hears this gospel; for if so, we could call none to believe but such as have believed, which is most absurd. Well, then, let God’s promise warrant you to believe in Christ; and if you do not think this sufficient, take his promise of welcome, ratified with his oath, Ezek. 33:11: these being the “two immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie.”

7. Let the indefinite and absolute nature of the covenant of grace be your warrant for embracing the Lord Jesus. The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, is conceived in the form of a blank bond or testamentary deed, where there is room left to every man to fill up his name, by the band of faith. The strain and tenor of it is, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people: I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: I will sprinkle clean water upon them: I will put my Spirit within them: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness: I will subdue their iniquities.” Where, you see, the grant runs in an indefinite way; no man’s name mentioned, neither any by name excluded. Why, what is the design of this, but that every man may be encouraged to subscribe his name, or to make application thereof to his own soul, in a way of believing, by which we are said to *take hold of God’s covenant*? O sirs! The covenant of grace, as it lies in the external dispensation of the gospel, (for now I abstract from his secret purposes, which are not at all the measure or rule of faith,) is just like a rope cast in among a company of drowning men; he that throws it in, cries to every one of them to take hold of the rope, promising to draw them safe to shore: so, God, in the gospel-

dispensation, proposes his covenant to every one as a ground of faith, assuring them, that whosoever takes hold of the covenant, and receives his Christ, whom he hath “given for a covenant of the people,—shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” For the Lord’s sake, do not put this rope of salvation away from you, under a pretence that you know not if it be designed for you. Would you not reckon it ridiculous madness in any of these drowning men now mentioned, to fall to disputing whether the rope were cast in to them, when they are at the very point of sinking to the bottom? Would not every one of them grab hold of it, with the utmost strength and vigour, without putting any question? Now, this is the very case, O sinner; thou art going down to the pit of eternal misery; God, by his ministers, cries to you to take hold of this rope of salvation: O then? “see that you refuse not him that speaketh from heaven;” do not dispute yourselves away from your own mercy.

8. Let the welcome that others have met with in coming to Christ be your encouragement to venture also. Never any really came to him but they met with a kindly reception. Ask the prodigal son, ask Mary Magdalene, Paul, and others, what reception they met with from this Saviour; they will be ready to tell you, that they *obtained mercy*. Now, the same mercy that saved them, is as ready to save you. You do not doubt that Moses, David, Peter, Paul, and other saints who are now in glory, had sufficient warrant to believe. Sirs, you have the same grounds of faith as ever they had, the same God, the same Saviour, the same Bible, the same covenant, the same promises, the same faithfulness, of God to lean on, as ever they had; and these grounds of faith are so firm, that they never disappointed any that leaned on them: and therefore be encouraged to believe, as they did. O how will it for ever gall and torment unbelieving sinners in hell when they see others, who believed upon the same grounds that were common to them also, sitting down in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves shut up in utter darkness, with devils and damned spirits, because of their unbelief. And how will the devil himself upbraid unbelievers in hell, when fallen under the same condemnation with himself, that they had such fair warrants to believe in Christ, which he never had!

Object. 2. ‘You tell me embrace Christ; but, alas be is far away out of my reach: Christ is in heaven, how shall I win him?’

Ans. Seeing you cannot come up to Christ, Christ is come down to you; and we bring him near to you, in “this word of salvation which we preach:” Isa. 46:12,13: “Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness: it shall not be far off; and my salvation shall not tarry.” And therefore, “say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that

is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead;) for the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach,” Rom. 10:6-8: Sirs, Christ is in this gospel, this word of faith and grace, which we, in the name of God deliver to you: and your faith must be undeviatingly fixed upon this word, otherwise you can never embrace him. As I believe or trust a man by his verbal or written promise; so I embrace Christ by the word of faith, or promises in the gospel. Suppose a responsible man residing in America, should send me his cheque for any sum of money, that man and his money are brought near to me by his cheque and security which he sends me: so here, though Christ be in heaven, and we upon earth, yet the word of faith, which we preach, brings him, his kingdom, righteousness, salvation, and whole fulness, nigh to every one of us, so that we need not *ascend into heaven, or descend into hell*, in quest of him.

Object. 3. ‘My arms have been so defiled with the embraces of other lovers, that I am afraid Christ will never allow me to embrace him.’ For answer, I only refer you to Jer. 3:1: “Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord.” ‘But,’ say you, ‘my sins are highly aggravated.’ *Ans.* Isa. 1:18: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Object. 4. ‘You tell me embrace him; but, alas! I lack an arm; I have no power to embrace him.’

Ans. If thou hast a will to embrace him, the great difficulty is over for there lies the principal stop: “Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” Where God gives *to will*, he gives also *to do of his own good pleasure*. You say, you lack the arm to embrace him; then do as the man with the withered hand did, attempt to “stretch it forth,” in obedience to the command of Christ. Believing is a thing we must be essaying, even before we can find the Spirit of God working it in us effectually. We cannot pray, we cannot sanctify the Sabbath, we cannot think a good thought, till the Spirit of God work it in us; and yet we do not forbear these duties because we have no power to do them; so, although we have no power to believe, yet we should be trying to believe. That way that the Spirit of God works faith in the souls of the elect, is, by making them sensible of their own inability, that they may turn the work over upon his own hand, who “worketh all our works in us, and for us.”

Object. 5. ‘Let me aim at believing as much as I will, I shall never be able to effect it, if I be not among God’s elect; for it is only they that are “ordained to eternal life,” that “do believe.”’

Ans. This is an ordinary sophism of the grand enemy of salvation, by which he discourages sinners from believing in the Lord Jesus: and the fallacy or weakness of it will easily appear, by applying the objection to the ordinary business of human life. When meat is set before you, do you decline to take or use it, for this reason, that you do not know whether God has ordained it for you? Do you not say, Meat is for the use of man, and this meat is set before me, and therefore I will take it. You do not say, I will not plough or sow my ground, because I know not if ever God has decreed that it shall bring forth; or, I will not go home to my house, because I know not if ever God has decreed I should come the length. You would reckon a man mad, or beside himself, who would argue in this manner, in affairs of this nature. Why, the case is the very same: as the secret decrees of Heaven lie quite out of the road in the management of the affairs of this life; so neither are they at all to be the measure or rule of our actings in the great concerns of eternity: “Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us, and to our children.” And the ground of your condemnation at the great day will not be, because you were not elected, but because you would not believe. The reprobate Jews were cut off, “because of their unbelief,” Rom. 11:7 and 20. I shall only add, that as you cannot know that the meat set before you is yours, in possession, till you take it: so neither can you ever know that Christ was ordained for you, till you take him into your possession by faith. And therefore, you must believe in Christ, before you know your election; otherwise you shall never know it, and shall never believe either. So much by way of exhortation.

I shall conclude this discourse with a short word to two sorts of persons.

First, To you who, like Simeon, have got him in the embraces of your souls, and who perhaps can say, to your sweet experience, with the spouse, “I have found him whom my soul loveth.” All I say to you, shall be comprised in these two or three words;

1. O bless God, as Simeon did, for such a privilege; “let the high praises of God be in your mouths.” I told you already, of several songs you have ground and reason to sing, which I shall not stand to resume. Only, to engage you to bless him, consider, that this is all the tribute he expects from you. Who will ever bless him, if not the “people that he has formed for himself?” Consider again, that this is the way to have blessings multiplied upon you; the thankful beggar is best

served at the door both of God and man. The trumpeter loves to sound where there is an echo, which brings back the sound to his ears; so God loves to bestow his blessings, where he hears of them again in songs of praise and gratitude. Praise is the work of heaven, through a long eternity: now, they who are bound to that land afar off, should be lisping out the language of the land before they reach there.

2. Have you got Christ in the arms of your souls? O then make good use of your golden season: and while you are allowed to ride with the King, in the chariot of the wood of Lebanon, gain spiritual profit from your interest with him, both for yourselves and others; particularly, entreat him, that he would revive his own work, which is under such a sad decay in our land at this day; study to “bring him into your mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived you.”

3. Have you got him in your arms? Then follow the spouse’s practice, Cant. 3:4: “I held him, and would not let him go.” O keep him in the embraces of your souls; his presence dispels clouds, and turns the shadows of death into the morning; it is like oil to the chariot-wheels of the soul: light, life, liberty, peace, pardon, and plenty, are his continual attendants. And, remember, that his departure is of a very dangerous consequence. It is true, his real presence shall never depart; but yet his quickening, strengthening, and upholding presence may be withdrawn to such a degree, that you may go “mourning without the sun:” and if, through untenderness, you provoke him to withdraw, the quarrel may be pursued even to the gates of hell; so that you may be made to cry out, “The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me,” Job 6:4.

And, in order to your keeping him in the embraces of your souls,

1st, Beware of every thing that may provoke him to withdraw; particularly beware of security, which made him to withdraw from the spouse, Cant. 5:2, and 6, compared. Beware of pride; for “God resisteth the proud,” and “beholds them afar off.” Beware of worldly-mindedness: “For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him,” Isa. 57:17. Beware of unbelief, that root of bitterness, which causes to “depart from the living God.” Distrust and “jealousy is the rage of a man;” much more is it provoking to God. Under the law, God appointed porters to keep watch at the door of the temple, that nothing might be allowed to enter, which might defile the dwelling-place of his name; thy soul and body, believer, is the temple of God; therefore guard against every thing that may defile the same.

2^{dly}, If you would hold Christ in the embraces of your souls, keep grace in lively exercise; for these are the spikenard and spices that send out a fragrant

smell for his reception. Keep the arm of faith continually about him; let the fire of divine love burn continually upon the altar of thy heart; let the anchor of hope be fixed within the veil; let the fountain of evangelical repentance be still running; and under your greatest attainments be humble, and take care to set the crown upon Christ's head, saying, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be the glory."

The *second* sort of persons I would speak a little to, are those who, perhaps, are complaining of hidings and withdrawals, and are perhaps saying, I came to the temple to see if I could get Christ in my arms, but I am disappointed; yea, matters are come that length with me, that I am ready to "raze foundations," and to conclude that I am an utter stranger to him. All I have to offer to you, shall be comprised in these two or three things, with which I conclude.

1. Allow me to ask, If there be not a void and emptiness in thy heart which the whole creation cannot fill, till Christ himself come and fill it? Are not ordinances, ministers, word, and sacrament, empty without him, like dry breasts? That says, thou art not altogether a stranger to him. And, therefore, do not entertain harsh thoughts of thyself; thy case is not at all unprecedented. What think ye of David, Psal. 13; of Asaph, Psal. 77; of Heman, Psal. 88; yea, of Christ himself, who, through the withdrawing of his Father's love, was made to utter that heart-rending cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

2. Know, for thy comfort, that thy hiding Lord will return again: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," Psal. 30:4,5; Isa. 54:7,8. The very breathings and longings of thy soul after him, are a pledge of his return; for "he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

3. When you cannot get Christ himself embraced, study to embrace his word of promise, as the Old Testament saints did, Heb. 11:13. As a loving wife will lay the letters of her absent husband in her breast, and perhaps kiss his handwriting; so lay the sweet promises of thy best husband in thy bosom, and between thy breasts, until he himself return.

4. *Lastly*, Maintain your claim to him on the ground of the covenant, when you cannot maintain it upon a ground of sense; as a wife will maintain her relation to her husband, though he be both angry and absent. The Lord loves to have his people pleading kindness, and maintaining their claim upon the marriage contract of the new covenant, when they "walk in darkness, and see no light," Isa. 1:10: and such a carriage as this, commonly lands in a happy meeting betwixt Christ and the souls of his people; for after believing, comes sealing.

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