

THE
Nature *and* Importance
OF
WALKING by FAITH:

A
S E R M O N
DELIVERED AT THE
ANNUAL ASSOCIATION
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TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
A FEW PERSUASIVES
TO A
GENERAL UNION IN PRAYER
FOR THE
REVIVAL OF REAL RELIGION.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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S E R M O N, &c.

2 COR. V. 7.

—*WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT.*

MUCH is said concerning faith in the holy scriptures, especially in the new testament; and great stress is laid upon it, especially by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. This, I apprehend, is not very difficult to be accounted for. Ever since the fall of man, we have been entirely dependent on the mercy of God, through a mediator. We all lie at his discretion, and are beholden to his mere sovereign grace for all the happiness we enjoy. We have nothing on which we can rely for the possession or continuance of any good, but the word and will of God. The only life, therefore, proper for a fallen creature, in our world, is a life of *faith*; to be constantly sensible of our dependence upon God, continually going to him, and receiving all from him, for the life that now is, or that which is to come.

Believers, and they only, are brought to be of a spirit suitable to such a kind of life. The hearts of all others are too full of pride and self-sufficiency; but these are contented to be pensioners on the bounty of another, can willingly commit their all into Christ's hands, and venture their present and everlasting concerns upon his word. *The just shall live by faith.**

Self-renunciation and *confidence in another*, are ideas which seem ever to accompany that of faith. The apostle speaks of being *justified* by faith,† that is, not by our own righteousness, but by the righteousness of

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another—

* Hab. ii. 4.

† Rom. v. 1.

another—of *living* by faith,* that is, not by our own earnings, so to speak ; but by the generosity of another—of *standing* by faith,† that is, not upon our own legs, as we should say, but upon those of another—and here, of *walking* by faith, which is as much as if he had said, ‘ we walk not trusting our own eyes, but the eyes of another. We are blind, and cannot guide ourselves, we must therefore rely upon God for direction and instruction.’ This, my brethren, is the life we must live while in this world, and this the manner in which we must walk in our progress towards the heavenly state. Great is the wisdom and goodness of God in so ordering it ; great glory hereby redounds to him, and great good accrues to us.

All I shall attempt will be, to *explain the NATURE, and shew the IMPORTANCE of the christian's walk by faith.* Both these seem necessary ; the one that we may form just ideas of what we have to do, and the other that we may feel our hearts excited to do it. O, may the same SPIRIT who indited the sacred passage, breathe upon us, that these ends may be accomplished !

Let us then, in the *first* place, enquire what is *intended* by the sacred writer, when he says, “ we walk by faith, not by sight.” Faith and sight, it is easy to see, stand here opposed, as indeed they do in many other parts of scripture, especially in that remarkable definition of faith, wherein the apostle to the Hebrews calls it *the evidence of things not seen* ;§ but what *kind* of sight it is opposed to, may deserve our attentive enquiry.

And here, before I proceed any farther, in order to make the way clear, I will take notice of a too generally received notion of the subject, a notion which appears to me equally unscriptural and pernicious : what I refer to is, that faith is to be considered as opposed to *SPIRITUAL fight, or spiritual discernment.* Indeed, I never heard of any person who said so in express words, either in preaching, writing, or conversation ; but expressions

* Gal. ii. 20. † Rom. xi. 20. § Heb. xi. 1.

expressions are often used which convey the same idea. When the terms *faith* and *sense* are used, 'tis common with many to understand by the latter, *sensible communion with God*. So it is common to hear a life of faith opposed to a life of *frames* and *feelings*. Those times in which we have the most spiritual *discernment* of God's glory, *sensible communion* with him, and *feel* our love most ardently drawn out to him, are thought to have the least of the exercise of faith. It is common to say 'there is no need of faith then, at those times we live by *sense*; but that when all our graces seem dead, and we can see no evidence whatever from whence to draw the favourable conclusion, then is the time to walk by faith.' The meaning is, then is the time to believe all is well, and so rest easy, whether we have evidence that it is so or not.

Thus we have often heard several passages of scripture applied, or rather miserably misapplied; for instance, that in the last chapter of Habakkuk, *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation*. As if by the fig-tree not blossoming, &c. was meant the christian's graces not being in exercise, and that then was the time to walk by faith, to rejoice in the God of our salvation! That passage also concerning *Abraham, who against hope, believed in hope*,* has been understood, as if to be strong in faith, giving glory to God, like Abraham, was to maintain an unshaken persuasion of the goodness of our state, whether we have evidence or no evidence.

So also that passage in the *fiftieth* of Isaiah, has been frequently brought for this purpose—*Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light; let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God*. As though a state of darkness there, meant a state of mind

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wherein

* Rom. iv. 18.

wherein a person could *discern* no evidence whatever of his being a good man, and as though such were there encouraged to make themselves easy, leave the matter with God, not doubting the goodness of their state.—Our Lord's rebuke to *Thomas* has been understood in the same manner; *Because thou hast SEEN me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have NOT SEEN, and yet have believed*;* as if a blessing should rest upon them, who, destitute of all discernable evidence of their christianity, nevertheless believe it with an unshaken confidence. If this is to walk by faith, then faith must stand opposed to *spiritual sight*, or *spiritual discernment*.

I doubt not but there is such a thing as to live upon *frames*, which ought to be guarded against. If I imagine, for instance, that God changes as I change, that he admires me one time and not another, or that his great love, from whence all my hope of salvation springs, rises and falls according to the state of my mind. This is doubtless to dishonour God, as it strikes at the sovereignty and immutability of his love. So if I derive my chief consolations from reflecting upon what *I am*, instead of reflecting upon what *Christ is*, this is to dishonour Christ, and may very properly stand opposed to living by faith. But this is not the common idea of living upon frames. It has been usual with many, to account that man to live upon frames, who, when he is stupid, and dark, and carnal, cannot be confident about the safety of his state; and him to live by faith who can maintain his confidence in the worst of frames. Allow me, brethren, to offer three or four plain reasons against this notion of the subject. And

1. Faith is the only *means* of spiritual discernment, and communion with God, and therefore cannot be opposed to them. Our best frames are those in which faith is most in exercise, and our worst when it is the least. Faith is the eye of the mind. It is that by which we realize invisible and spiritual objects, and so have fellowship with God, Yes, it is by this grace that

we

*we behold the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the spirit of the Lord.**

2. If faith is opposed to spiritual discernment and communion with God, then it must *work alone*; it must never act in conjunction with any of those graces wherein we *feel* our hearts go out to God, for this would be to confound faith and sense together. But this is contrary to fact. When we have most faith in exercise, we have most love, most hope, most joy, and so of all the graces—all sweetly act in harmony together. Thus the scriptures represent it, as ever accompanied by other graces, especially by love, purity, and lowliness of heart. It is expressly said to *work by love*,† and it should seem never works without it. It is also said to *purify the heart*.‡ The exercise of faith, therefore, and the exercise of holiness, can never be separated. Equally true is it, that it is ever attended with *lowliness of heart*. There are two instances of faith recorded, which our Lord particularly commended, saying—he had not seen such great faith, no not in Israel: the one was the case of the woman of Canaan, and the other of the Roman centurion; and both these were attended with great humility. The one was contented to be treated as a *dog*, and the other thought himself unworthy that Christ should come under his roof.§ A confidence unaccompanied with these, if it may be called faith at all, seems nearly to resemble what the apostle *James* called *faith without works*, which he pronounced to be *dead*, **BEING ALONE.**||

3. If faith is to be understood in this sense, then it not only works *without*, but *contrary* to other graces.—The scriptures encourage a spirit of self-examination and godly jealousy. These are modest and upright graces, and constitute much of the beauty of christianity. *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith*, say the inspired writers; *try your own selves!*—*Let us fear lest a promise being left us of entering into rest, any of us should seem*

* 2 Cor. iii. 18. † Gal. v. 6. ‡ Acts xv. 9. § Matt. xv. 27, 28. viii. 8. || Jam. ii. 17.

stem to come short of it.—Let us pass the time of our *sojourning here in fear.** But always to be confident of the safety of our state, let the work of sanctification go on as it may, is not only unfriendly to such a spirit, but subversive of it. Hence 'tis common with some to call every degree of godly jealousy by the name of *unbelief*, and to impute it to *the enemy*, yea to shun it, and cry out against it as if it were itself a devil. This is not the most favourable symptom of an honest heart. Surely an heart truly upright would not wish to receive comfort itself but upon solid evidence; and where it was learned to call such a fear by the name of *unbelief* I know not; I think I may say, it never came from the word of God. If the veracity of God were called in question, no doubt it would be *unbelief*; but the question at those times with a sincere mind, is not whether God will prove faithful in saving those that trust in him; but whether he be indeed the subject of that trust. His doubts do not respect God, but himself. Love and fear are the two great springs and guardians of right action. When love is in exercise we do not stand in need of fear to stimulate or guide us; but when we are not constrained by the former, it is well for us to be restrained by the latter.

4, and lastly. Faith, in that case, must be *unsupported by evidence.*—God's word affords us no warrant to conclude ourselves interested in his promises, and so in a state of safety, unless we bear the characters to which the promises are made. We have no right, for instance, to apply to ourselves that promise, *Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,*† unless we bear the character of the party there addressed. This is expressed in the foregoing verse, *But thou Israel art MY SERVANT,* &c. If, from the real desire of our hearts, we yield not ourselves *servants* to God, no impression of this passage upon our minds can warrant us to conclude that God is indeed our God, or that we shall

* 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Heb. iv. 1. 1 Pet. i. 17. † Isa. xli. 10.

shall be strengthened, helped, or upholden by him. So also no man has any right to conclude himself interested in that promise, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee*, unless he be so *drawn* from the love of sin, self, and the world, as to love God better than any of them all. But if we are to hold fast the confidence of our safety, whatever be the condition of our mind, or the evils in our conduct, then we are in that instance to believe without evidence. If the work of sanctification be the only scriptural evidence of our interest in Christ, then in proportion to that work increasing or declining, our evidence must be strong or weak. When we degenerate into carnality and indifference, it must of course diminish. To say then that those are the times in which we exercise most faith, is the same as to say we exercise most faith when we have least evidence; and consequently it must be a kind of faith, if it be faith at all, that is unsupported by evidence.*

There

* All true faith must have TRUTH for its foundation. That faith to which the scriptures promise salvation, is founded upon evidence, and that evidence is THE TESTIMONY OF GOD. Hence it is, with great propriety, by the apostle defined *the belief of the truth*. 2 Thes. ii. 13. This definition includes more than many seem to apprehend. To believe the truth in reality, is cordially to credit the account that God has given of himself, of us, of sin, of Christ, earth, heaven, &c. Whoever thus realizes divine truth, must, of necessity, feel its influence. The same apostle tells us that those who receive the word *as it is*, find it *effectually* to work in them. 1 Thes. ii. 13. Hence we are said to be *sanctified through the truth*, to know the truth, and be *made free* by it. John xvii. 17. viii. 32. I cannot believe God to be that amiable, lovely being which his word represents him to be, without loving him. I cannot believe myself to be that vile and worthless being that God represents me to be, without abhorring myself in dust and ashes. If I really credit what God hath said of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it is impossible but that I should hate it, and perceive its dreadful demerit, and plainly see myself righteously condemned for being a subject of it. If I really believe the record that God hath given of his Son, that is the same thing as to think of his excellencies in a measure as God thinks of them, and in that case I cannot but embrace him with all my heart, and venture my everlasting all upon his atonement. If from my heart I believe what God hath said of the vanity of the present world, and the substantial bliss of

There are but two cases that I recollect in the whole system of true christian experience, which so much as seem to resemble this notion, and these are, in fact, essentially

that to come---If I realize the emptiness of all the enjoyments of the former, and the eternal weight of glory pertaining to the latter, I shall necessarily labour, not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.

If this be a just notion of faith, then it will follow, 1. *That all unconverted men are truly, and in the most literal and proper sense of the word, UNBELIEVERS.* Whatever they may pretend, they do not realize what God has revealed of his own or their character, of the nature of sin and its dreadful demerit, of the excellence of Christ, of the vanity of this world, and the solid bliss of the next. Nor can this their unbelief be removed but by their becoming entire new creatures by a work of the almighty Spirit of God.---2. *That a mere cold assent to things, commonly called believing the doctrines of the gospel, unaccompanied with love to them, or a dependence on Christ for salvation, is very far from being true saving faith.* Let but the doctrines of the gospel be really and heartily believed as God hath revealed them, and as before said, it will be impossible but that we should feel a determination to venture upon Christ alone for salvation, with all the proper effects of living faith. But persons may profess to believe those doctrines when they do not, or may believe them partially, but not as God hath revealed them. Yea, a person may think these his professions to be true, and these his notions to be just, and yet be an infidel at heart. The Jews professed to believe Moses, and no doubt verily thought they did, but our Lord told them, *Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.* John v. 46. We are under a necessity, therefore, of concluding, that where these effects are not produced, the faith of such persons is in a great degree pretended, and not real; and in that degree in which it is real it is very superficial, it reaches only to the shell of truth at farthest. The essence and glory of the gospel is by them neither discerned nor believed.---3. *That all that confidence which is unsupported by evidence, tho' held fast by so many, is not faith, but presumption, or delusion.* If faith is the belief of the truth, then whatever I believe ought to be a truth, and a truth supported by evidence, prior to, and independent of, my believing it. This is certainly the case respecting the excellency and all-sufficiency of Christ. He is what he is, whether I believe it or not. However I may disallow of him, he is chosen of God and precious. Whatever real excellence I at any time discern or believe to be in him, I only believe the truth, and what would have been the truth if I had never believed it. Faith, therefore, draws aside the vail, and discovers things in some measure as they are. So, if that persuasion that I may have of my interest in Christ have any right to the name of faith, it must be a truth, and a truth capable of being proved by scripture evidence at the time.

essentially different from it. One is that of *the most eminent christians having a general, and well-grounded persuasion of their interest in Christ, even at such times wherein they may not experience those evident and sensible exercises of grace which they do at other times.* But then, it is to be observed, grace hath more ways than one of being in exercise: the grace of love, for instance;—some times it is exercised in the most tender and affectionate feelings of the heart towards Christ, longing to be with, and to enjoy him in the world to come; at other times it works in a way of cheerful serving him, and promoting his interest in the present world. This latter may not so sensibly strike the person himself as being an exercise of love, but perhaps it may strike other people with superior evidence.

The industrious peasant sitting in his evening chair, sees his children gathering round him, and courting his affections by an hundred little winning ways. He looks, and smiles, and loves. The next day he returns to his labour, and cheerfully bears the burden of the day in order to provide for these his little ones, and promote their interest.—During his day's labour he may not feel his love operate in such sensible emotions as he did the evening before. Nay, he may be so attentive to other things, as not immediately to have them in his thoughts. What then? he loves his children—indeed he gives proof of it, by cheerfully enduring the toils of labour, and willingly denying himself of many a comfort that they might share their part; and were he to hear of their being injured or afflicted, he would quickly feel the returns of glowing affection in as strong, and perhaps stronger emotions than ever.

Thus the believer may have real love to God in exercise, exciting him to a cheerful and habitual discharge of duty, and a careful watch against evil, and yet feel little or none of that desirable tenderness of heart which he at other times experiences. He has grace in exercise, only it does not work in the same way as it does at some other times; and he in general enjoys

a conscious satisfaction that the more he knows of God, his holy law, and glorious gospel, the more he loves them. During this he may have an abiding satisfaction that things are right with him. But this is a very different thing from a person at all events maintaining the safety of his state, yea and reckoning himself in so doing to be strong in faith, giving glory to God, while carnality governs his spirit, and folly debases his conversation!

The *other* case is, when, on a failure of evidence from a reflexion on *past* experiences, the believer has recourse to an *immediate application* to the Lord Jesus Christ, casting himself directly on his mercy, and relying on his word, seeing he hath said *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.** This case, no doubt, often occurs. The believer, through the prevalence of carnality, with some other causes, too often finds his evidences for glory so obscured, that *past* experiences will afford but small consolation. At such a time, his mind is either easy, and carnally disposed—in that case a few painful fears will do him no harm; or else his heart is depressed with perplexity and gloom—in that case nothing is better than immediately to go to Christ as a poor sinner for salvation. This is the shortest, and 'tis commonly the surest way. It is not best in such a state of mind, to stand disputing whether we have believed or no: be that as it may, the door of mercy is still open, and the redeemer still says, *him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.* It is best, therefore, to make a fresh venture of our souls upon him, that if we have never before trusted in him, we may now.

This is no more than he has a *warrant* at any time to do, let things be as they may with him. For though internal qualifications are necessary to our concluding ourselves *interested in* Christ, yet it is not so in respect of *application to* him. The perplexed soul need not stay to enquire whether he be fit to come to Christ before he ventures. It is not required that he should prove his

his saintship ere he applies for mercy, though it is ere he claims interest in gospel blessings. All that is necessary here is, that he be sensible of his being a vile and lost sinner, and *that* is not to be considered as a qualification, giving him a right to come, but as a state of mind essential to the act itself of coming.

Many a christian has found sweet rest to his soul by such a direct application to Christ; and surely it would be much better for christians who go almost all their life in painful perplexity lest they should be mistaken at last, if, instead of perpetually poring on past experiences, they were to practice more in this way. This would furnish them with present evidence, which is much the best, and what God best approves, for he loves to have us continue to exercise our graces, and not barely remember that we have exercised them some time or other heretofore. This in some sort, may be called a walking by faith, and not by sight, and in this case faith may in some sense be opposed to spiritual sight. 'Tis opposed to that discernment which we sometimes have of being true christians from a review of past experiences. But then this, let it be remembered, is ever attended with *present spiritual discernment* of Christ's excellence, and a longing desire after interest in him, and herein essentially differs from what we have been opposing. Confidence in the one case is nothing else but carnal security, tending to make men easy without God; confidence in the other is an actual venture of the soul afresh on the Lord Jesus, encouraged by his gracious testimony. The subject of the one considers himself as an established saint; the other as a poor lost sinner, and deals with Christ for salvation just as he did when he first applied to him. To the one, we say, *Be not high minded, but fear*; to the other, *Fear not, thou shalt not be ashamed; none ever trusted in him and was confounded!*

In what sense then do we walk by faith and not by sight? I answer, in general, walking by faith is A
GOING FORWARD IN THE WAYS OF GODLINESS, AS
B INFLUENCED

INFLUENCED NOT BY SENSIBLE, BUT INVISIBLE OBJECTS; OBJECTS, OF THE REALITY OF WHICH WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE, BUT THE TESTIMONY OF GOD. But perhaps faith may be considered more particularly as opposite to sight in *three* senses, namely to corporal sight, to the discoveries of mere reason, and to ultimate vision.

First. To walk by faith is opposed to walking by *corporal sight*. In this sense we shall find it plentifully used in the *eleventh chapter to the Hebrews*, concerning Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and others. Thus *Abel* by faith offered a more excellent offering than Cain. God had said in effect once for all, that he would never speak nor be spoken to in a way of friendship by any of the human race, but through a mediator. This was intimated, partly by man's being debarred from all access to the tree of life, partly by the promise of the woman's seed, and partly by the institution of sacrifices. Cain overlooked all this, and approached God without an *expiatory* sacrifice, as if there had been no breach between them, and so no need of an atonement. This was an instance of daring *unbelief*. Abel, on the contrary, took God at his word, perceived the evil of sin, and the awful breach made by it—dared not to bring an offering without a victim for atonement—had respect to the promised Messiah—and thus by faith in the *unseen* lamb offered a more excellent offering than Cain.

Thus also it is said of *Noah*, *by faith he being warned of God of THINGS NOT SEEN as yet*, moved with fear, prepared an *ark to the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world*, &c. No doubt the world were ready to despise Noah while building his ark as an enthusiastic old man, that put himself to a deal of trouble, and wanted to put other people to as much, merely through a notion that ran in his head that the world should be drowned. Why, was there any thing in the world that looked like it, or seemed to portend such an event? Nothing at all; all things seemed to
continue

continue as they were from the creation. What then could induce Noah to do as he did? Nothing but the testimony of God, which he credited, and acted accordingly.

So likewise it is said of *Abraham* when called to go into another country, *by faith he obeyed, and went out, NOT KNOWING WHITHER HE WENT.* A pretty errand it would seem to his friends and neighbours. It is possible some of these observing him preparing for a journey, might enquire whither he was going—Going? I am going to a land which *the Lord is to shew me.* ‘And have you ever seen this land?’ No, I neither know the country, nor a step of the way to it. ‘A fine tale indeed! but seriously, what in the world can move you to such an undertaking?’ I rely upon the *testimony of God.* He hath said, *get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, unto a land THAT I WILL SHEW THEE—* I take him at his word, and act accordingly.

These were cases in point for the apostle to quote. The *Hebrews* seemed hardly contented with an *unseen* high priest, an *invisible* religion. They had been used to priests and sacrifices that they could hear, and see, and handle with their bodily senses. Like their fathers by Moses, therefore, they were ready to say of Jesus, ‘we know not where he is gone, come, let us make us a captain, and return to judaism.’ Judaism? methinks, says the apostle, true judaism would condemn you. All your forefathers acted upon a principle which you seem about to abandon. They walked by faith, not by sight. They lived, they died in the faith, even in the faith of that very Messiah of whom you make so light.

In this sense it is easy to see faith and sight are to be taken in our Lord’s rebuke to *Thomas*, when he says, *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believed.* It is as if he had said, ‘You think you have acted very prudently; but what must the christian world do in after ages if they act upon your principle? Christianity in the whole of it will depend upon testimony—whoever

receives it after your death, yea in your life time besides yourselves, must receive it upon your testimony. Blessed are they that shall cordially so receive it, and blessed had you been Thomas, to have set them the example by believing the testimony of your brethren.'

Faith may be considered as opposed in the *next* place to the discoveries of *mere reason, unassisted by revelation*. —In this sense it seems to be used in reference to *Sarah*. Through faith she received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because *she judged him faithful who had promised*.^{*} How Sarah should have a son was not only indiscernable by the corporal eye, but by an eye of reason, since it must be, if at all, entirely beside the common course of nature. She had nothing to rely upon in this case but the promise of God.

We do not suppose faith and *right reason* to be opposites; that be far from us. On the contrary, nothing is more evident than that christianity is entirely a rational system; and it is its glory that it is so. We should never have been required to give *a reason* for the hope that is in us, if there had been no reason to be given. —But though nothing in revelation be contrary to right reason, yet there are many things which our reason could never have found out, had they not been made known by the supreme intelligence. The plan of redemption by Jesus Christ, in particular, contains a set of truths which the eye had never seen, nor the ear heard, nor had they entered the heart of man to conceive, had not God revealed them to us by his Spirit. For all the pleasure that we enjoy, brethren, in contemplating these glorious truths, we are wholly beholden to the testimony of God. Indeed so far are they from being discoverable by mere reason, that every blessing contains in it abundantly more than men or angels could have asked or thought! It staggers our reason to receive it, even now it is told us. At every
pause

^{*} Heb. xi. 11.

pause we must stand and wonder, saying, **IS THIS THE MANNER OF MAN, O LORD JEHOVAH!**

Not only was our reason incapable of finding out many truths before they were revealed, but even now they are revealed they contain things above our comprehension. 'Tis one thing to say scripture is contrary to *right reason*, and another thing to say it may exhibit truths too great for our reason to grasp.* God must have told us nothing about his own existence, and infinite perfections, if he had told us nothing but what we could comprehend. In this case it becomes us to know our littleness, and bow our understandings to the supreme intelligence. It is the most rational thing in the world so to do. If God has said any thing, we ought to rest assured that so it is. In these cases we ought to trust *his* eyes, so to speak, rather than our *own*, and be content to walk by faith, and not by sight.

Once more. Faith may be considered as opposed to *ultimate vision*.—The saints in glory are described as *seeing Christ as he is*—as *knowing even as they are known*

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—and

* May not the great disputes which have taken place concerning *faith* and *reason*, as if one were opposite to the other, have risen in a great degree from using the term *reason* without defining it? The word *reason*, like the word *understanding*, has two senses: *first*, it signifies *the fitness of things*. So the apostles used it when they said 'It is not *reason* that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables;' Acts vi. 2. that is, it is not *fit*, it is not *proper*. *Second*, it signifies *our power, or capacity of reasoning*. So it is said of Nebuchadnezzar, that his *reason* returned to him; Dan. iv. 36. that is, his *power or capacity of reasoning*. Now it is easy to see that these are two essentially different ideas: the one is perfect and immutable, remaining always the same; the other is shattered and broken by sin, and liable to a thousand variations through blindness and prejudice. No divine truth can ever disagree with the former, but it may be both above and contrary to the latter.

If people were to talk in matters of science and philosophy as some have affected to talk in religion, they would be treated as fools, and deemed unworthy of attention. A philosopher for instance, tells an unlettered countryman that 'tis generally thought that the earth turns round every day upon its own axis, and not the sun round the earth. The countryman replies, 'I don't believe a word about it.' Very likely, says the philosopher, but why not? 'It is

—and as being citizens of a city where there shall be *no night*, and where they shall need *no candle*, neither *light of the sun*, nor *light of the moon*, FOR THE LORD GOD SHALL BE THE LIGHT THEREOF.† Our knowledge of things there will be immediate, and intuitive, and not through the medium of the word and ordinances, as it is here. The sacred scriptures are to us, with reverence be it spoken, like a letter from a distant friend, but when we come face to face *ink and paper shall be needed no more*. However, for the present it is otherwise. We are yet in the body, and while so, as the apostle observes in the verse preceding the text, *we are absent from the Lord*, and must be glad of these helps. Our duty and interest at present is to make much of this letter, and be thankful that we can walk by it through this world, *as by a light in a dark place*, till we come to a better, where we shall no more walk by faith, but by sight.

Thus far I have dwelt chiefly upon the *terms*; but that we may obtain a more comprehensive view of the *thing* itself, namely, of a christian's walking by faith, let us take a view of a few of those circumstances and situations through which he has to pass during the present life. It is in these that faith, as well as every other

contrary to *my reason*.* Contrary to your reason, that may be, but I hope you don't think every thing contrary to *your* reason is contrary to *right reason*! Were men of the greatest understanding but to consider that there is a far greater disproportion between some truths which respect the existence of God, and their capacities, than between any truths belonging to human science, and the capacity of the most ignorant rustic, they would be ashamed to say, 'such a thing cannot be true because it is contrary to *my reason*.'

It is right, and stands commended in scripture, to *apply our hearts to understanding*; but it is wrong, and stands condemned in scripture, yea by the same pen, and in the same page, to lean to *our own understanding*. See Prov. ii. 2. iii. 5. So I apprehend it is right to adhere to *right reason*, and to use all means to find out what it is; but it is wrong, and presumptuous, to set up *our reason* as a standard competent to decide what is truth and what is error, for that is the same thing as supposing that our ideas of fitness and unfitness always accord with the real fitness of things.

† 1 John iii. 2. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Rev. xxii. 5. xxi. 23.

other grace, is exercised. Allow me then to request your attention, brethren, to four or five observations on the subject.

I. *There are many DARK SEASONS IN GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS WITH US, in which we can see no way of escape, nor find any source of comfort but THE TESTIMONY OF GOD.*—God's friends are not distinguished in this world by an exemption from trying providences; he views that, methinks, as too trifling a badge of distinction. They shall be known by what is far more noble and advantageous, namely, by patience, obedience, submission, and divine support under them. Moreover, as we profess to be friends of God, and to trust the salvation of our souls, with all our concerns, in his hands, he sees it proper to prove the sincerity of our professions, and the stability of our hearts. He brings us into such circumstances, therefore, as shall try us whether we will confide in him or not.

Christ has told his followers once for all, that *all power in heaven and earth is in his hands*—that he is *head over all things to the church*—that he *will surely do them good*—that however things may seem, *all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose*—that as to temporal things, let them but *trust in the Lord, and do good, and they shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed*—and as to eternal things, if they have a few light afflictions, they shall last but as for *a moment*, and shall *work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.^{*} These promises seem easy to be believed when things go smooth and pleasing; and it is very natural for us, in a day of prosperity, to talk of these things, and try to comfort those with them who are labouring in adversity. But the greatest trial is when it comes home to ourselves. Then 'tis well if we fall not under the reproof of *Eliphaz, Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees; but now it is*
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Matt. xxviii. 18. Ep. i. 22. Gen. xxxii. 12. Rom. viii. 28.
Ps. xxxvii. 3. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

come upon thee, and thou faintest, it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.† Then, if ever, is the time for us to walk by faith and not by sight.

We create to ourselves *darlings*, and place much of our happiness in their enjoyment. God not unfrequently takes these first away, as being most his rivals. If one child is more beloved than all the rest, if he must be clothed with a coat of many colours, the coat must quickly be returned without the owner; yes, the period must soon arrive when it shall be said *Joseph is not!* These, and a few more strokes of the kind, will try *Jacob's* faith to the uttermost; and he will find it hard work to reconcile promises with providences. ‘*Thou saidst I will surely do thee good—but all these things are against me.*’* Ah, he fails! He fails like *Asaph* in a similar condition, who could not see how God could be good to *Israel* when waters of a full cup were wrung out to them.† The *Shunemite's* woman will set us a better example than either the patriarch or the prophet. *Is it well?* said *Elisha's* servant, when her child lay dead in her house—She replied, IT IS WELL.‡ This was in effect saying, ‘whether I can see it or not, I know he doth all things well.’ This is believing when we cannot see, taking God at his word against all the rebellion of sense and feeling. This is what *Jacob* should have done, but O that *Jacob* had failed alone! If to resemble him in this instance would constitute us *Israelites*, we should be most of us *Israelites* indeed!

We are often very thrifty in *devising plans* for futurity, and apt to promise ourselves great degrees of happiness when they are accomplished. Here it is common for God to throw confusion upon our schemes, and cause things to run in quite a different channel to what we expected. *Job*, while in prosperity, sat like a bird in her well-feathered nest, and thought within himself ‘I shall live to enjoy numerous years of uninterrupted prosperity, to see children’s children, and then go down to the grave in peace; or as he himself afterwards

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† Job. iv. 4, 5. * Gen. xlii. 36. † Ps. lxxiii. ‡ 2 Kings iv. 26.

in the bitter hour of reflection expressed it, '*I said I shall die in my nest, I shall multiply my days as the sand!*' § And, so he did at last, but there was a melancholy chasm in his life which he never expected. Such there are, more or less, in all our lives, and 'tis well if we do not think hard of our best friend in such situations. Some have been ready to ask, 'Is this love? Is this his doing who hath said I will surely do thee good?' Yes, and you shall see it in the end, as *Ajaph* did, who after he had been to God's sanctuary, and saw things as they were, went home it seems, and penned the *seventy-third psalm*, beginning it all in ecstasy, saying TRULY GOD IS GOOD TO ISRAEL! Christians, how criminal, how cruel that he that never failed us yet, should be so mistrusted as he is! It should seem to suggest as if he were such a God that we cannot trust him out of sight!

How amiable is that spirit, how happy is that heart, which in every situation places unbounded confidence in JEHOVAH'S word. Such may be hedged up on every side, and encompassed like Israel at the Red Sea, with seeming unsurmountable difficulties; yet even here they will follow Israel's example, they will cry unto God, and rely upon his mercy. If means can be used they will use them; if not, they will *stand still and see the salvation of the Lord*. *Speak unto the children of Israel*, said the Lord, *that they go forward*—go forward! they might have replied, what, plunge ourselves into the sea? Go forward! what, leap at once into the jaws of destruction? But nothing of this.—At first indeed their faith seemed to fail them, but they soon recovered themselves, *Speak unto the children of Israel*, said the Lord, *that they go forward*—they went—a way was made in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters. Well may it be said, BY FAITH Israel passed through the Red Sea! *—Minds thus disposed might defy the united sources of worldly sorrow to render them unhappy. Let poverty stare them in the face, let pinching want stretch over them her miserable sceptre, they have been known even here by faith to break forth into songs of praise. Thus sang
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good *Habakkuk* (and this evidently appears to be his situation, and not a state of *spiritual declension*) *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls;—yet will I rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be glad in the God of my salvation.* Thus also sang the church even in her captivity, when her country was laid waste, Jerusalem rased to the ground, and the temple burnt to ashes, *The LORD is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in HIM!**

II. In all our APPROACHES TO, AND FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST, it is by FAITH in the account that God hath given of him in his word.—Christ's excellence, undertaking, and benefits, are the joy, and even the life of our souls, if we are true christians. But what evidence have we of all or any of these? Yea, what evidence have we that there is or ever was such a person as Jesus Christ? or if there was, that he was the Messiah, the Son of God? We neither saw him live, nor die, rise again, nor ascend to heaven. We never saw the miracles he wrought, nor heard the voice from the excellent glory saying, 'This is my beloved son, hear him.' We speak of his personal excellencies, divine and human, of his love, zeal, righteousness, meekness, patience, &c. but what know we of them? We rejoice in his being constituted our surety to obey the law, and endure the curse in our stead; but how know we that so indeed it is? We glory in the imputation of his righteousness, and exult in the hope of being found in him, and being for ever with him, faultless before his throne to serve him day and night in his temple; but on what do we rely for all this? If our expectations are but just, truly they are noble; but if groundless, extravagant. Are they then well founded? Yes, THE TESTIMONY OF GOD is the rock whereon they rest. He has told us by the mouth of his servants, the inspired writers, all that is necessary for us to know of the character, conduct, and errand of his Son; of every office he sustained, and every

every end for which he came into the world. To all this he has added, that *whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.** So they preached, and so we have believed. We have, through grace, ventured our everlasting ALL in his hands, nor is it in the hands of we know not who: *we know whom we have trusted, and that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him against that day.†* For though none of these things are visible to our mortal eyes, yet having evidence that God hath said them, we are satisfied. We would as soon trust God's word as our own eyes. Thus we walk like *Moses, as seeing him who is invisible,* and thus answer to that description, *whom having NOT SEEN ye love, is whom, though now ye see him not, yet BELIEVING, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.‡*

In all our applications to Christ, we have to rely merely upon the testimony of God. Here is a poor self-condemned sinner comes pressing through the crowd of discouraging apprehensions, that he may touch the hem of the redeemer's garment, so to speak, and be made whole. As he approaches, one set of thoughts suggest, how can so great a sinner hope for mercy? Is it not doubtful whether there be efficacy enough in the blood of Christ itself to pardon such heinous crimes? 'I know my crimes are heinous beyond expression, replies the burdened soul, and I should doubtless give up my case as desperate, but that I have heard of him that *he is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him.§* I will go therefore, who can tell?' As he goes, other objections assail him, questioning whether Christ can find in his heart to accept of such an one? 'I should think not indeed, rejoins the poor man, but he hath said, **HIM THAT COMETH UNTO ME I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT—I** know, were I to consult nothing but my feelings, and only to fix my eyes on the enormity of my sin, I should utterly despair; but encouraged by **HIS WORD** I will go forward—I will walk by faith, not by sight—O, I hear him say, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden—and ye shall*

* John iii. 16. † 2 Tim. i. 12. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 8. § Heb. vii. 25.

shall find rest unto your souls ! This, this is what I want ! Depart from me all ye that vex my soul, I will go in the strength of the Lord God !'

III. *We have to GIVE UP MANY PRESENT ENJOYMENTS for Christ's sake, wherein we have no VISIBLE prospect of recompence, none of any kind but what arises from THE PROMISE OF GOD.*—Self-denial is one of the initial laws of Christ's kingdom. Far from enticing people into his service by promises of wealth, ease and honour, he set out with this public declaration, *Whoever will be my disciple must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.*† But who would enter upon these terms ? Who would give up houses, lands, friends, and reputation, and expose himself to hardships, persecution, and death, for nothing ? Yet many followed him, and that to the day of their death ; yea, and upon these very terms too, they LEFT ALL, AND FOLLOWED HIM. What then induced them ? Did not they act irrationally ? Prophets, apostles, and martyrs ! what mean ye ? Have ye no regard for yourselves ? What ! are you destitute of the feelings of men ? ' No such thing—we have respect unto the recompence of reward.' Reward !—what can that be ?—nothing surely below the sun, unless it were every thing the reverse of what is agreeable to human nature ! ' True, but our Lord has declared, *whosoever shall forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and inherit everlasting life.** We rely upon this, and this supports us.'

God's friends, in all ages, have forsaken sensible for invisible enjoyments. Encouraged by considerations like these, *Ruth* forsook her father and her mother, and the land of her nativity, and came to a people whom she knew not. It was this that determined her to go forward when, as *Naomi* told her, there were no earthly prospects before her. It was this made her resolve not to go back with *Orpah*, but to cast in her lot with the friends of the God of Israel. *The Lord recompence thy work,*

† Matt. xvi. 24.

* Matt. xix. 29.

work, said Boaz to her afterwards, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust! †

The same things influenced *Moses*, it seems to refuse a crown. It has been thought that in virtue of his adoption he might have been king of Egypt; but that throne not only like other thrones exposed him that sat thereon to numberless snares, but probably was inaccessible to any but who would continue the system of idolatry and oppression. In that case for *Moses* to have been king of Egypt must have been to have sacrificed a good conscience, despised a crown of glory that fadeth not away, and united in persecuting his own, and the Lord's people. *Moses* seems fully to have weighed this matter. The result was, he refused to be called the son of *Pharaoh's* daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming even the reproach of *Christ* greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. He freely, therefore, leaves the life of a courtier—avows himself the friend of the poor despised captives—and dares to retire into *Midian* to live the life of an obscure shepherd. I say he *dared* to retire, for it required a greater degree of fortitude thus to deny himself, than to stand in the front of the hottest battle. But by faith he forsook Egypt, and went and lived a stranger in a strange land, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible—yes, he had respect unto the recompence of reward.*

In short, through this the holy tribes of martyrs in all ages loved not their lives unto death. By faith in invisible realities, as the apostle to the Hebrews largely proves, they bore all manner of cruelties, not accepting deliverance itself upon dishonourable conditions; suffered all kinds of deaths with unremitting fortitude, and in some sort like their glorious leader, triumphed over principalities and powers when they fell.

Indeed every man in the world may be said to walk either by faith or by sight. There is not only a giving

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† Ruth ii. 11, 12.

* Heb. xi. 24--27.

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up sensible for invisible enjoyments by *actually parting with them*, but by *not setting our hearts upon them* as our chief good. This may be done where there is no call actually to give them up, and is done by all *real* christians in the world. Men whose chief good consists in the profits, pleasures, or honours of this life, live by *sight*: they derive their life from objects before their eyes, having neither patience nor inclination to wait for a portion in the world to come. But good men, as well the rich as the poor, derive their life from above, and so live by faith; *their life is hid with Christ in God.**

Perhaps here, as much as any where, is required the peculiar exercise of faith. For one actually divested of earthly good to look upward, and set his heart on things above, is faith; but for one still possessed of this, one on whom providence smiles, prospering him in all he sets his hand to, blessing him with wife and children, houses and lands in abundance, for him to exercise such a degree of indifference to all these, as to derive his chief happiness from invisible realities, this is faith indeed! This seems to have been exemplified in *Abraham*, and others of the patriarchs. Of him it is said, *by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country.†* How is this? We don't wonder when he and Sarah went into *Egypt* on account of a famine, that he should consider himself a *sojourner* there;‡ but how is it that he should do so in *Canaan*, the land of promise, his own estate as it were? The next verse informs us—*for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*—So *Jacob*, when before Pharaoh, called his whole life a *pilgrimage*,§ though the far greater part of it was spent in the land of promise; and *they that say such things*, adds the apostle, *declare plainly that they seek a country*. Though God had given them the good land, they would not make it their *chief* good. They could not be contented with this *Canaan*, but longed for another. Noble souls! bid them lift up their eyes eastward, and westward, and northward

* Col. iii. 3. † Heb. xi. 9, 10, 13, 14, 16. ‡ Gen. xii. 11.
§ Gen. xlvii. 9.

northward, and southward, and tell them all they can see is their own ; still they will not live by sight, but by faith—they will desire a better country, that is, an heavenly one.

IV. *There are many low and distressing seasons to which the CHURCH OF GOD is subject, in which there is little or no visible ground of encouragement, scarcely any but what arises from THE PROMISE OF GOD.*—The whole church of God, as well as individuals, has in all ages, had its day of adversity set over against the day of prosperity. Israel, after their deliverance from Egypt, and settlement in Canaan, enjoyed pretty much prosperity, especially in the days of David and Solomon. But by a series of provocations after that, they procured to themselves the Babylonish captivity. At that melancholy period, those amongst them that feared the Lord must be supposed to be all in darkness. Jerusalem laid waste—the temple burnt with fire—Judah carried captive—ah, what becomes of God's interest in the world ! The foundations of his visible kingdom seemed to be laid in the holy mountains round about Jerusalem ; if these are destroyed, what can the righteous do ? They had long sighed and cried for the idolatrous abominations of their countrymen, and prayed, and hoped that mercy might be lengthened out ; but now all seems over. For their idolatry, they must go and have enough of idolaters ! They that feared the Lord must also go with them. By the rivers of Babylon they must go and sit down. Those that had been used to sound the high praises of God in Zion, must now hang their harps upon the willows, as having no use for them ! Nor is this the worst ; they must be taunted, and their God derided by their insulting Lords. ‘ Come, say they, sing us one of the songs of Zion,’—as if they had said, ‘ Now see what your religion has availed you ! This was your favourite employ, and these the songs wherewith you addressed your deity, in whom you confided to deliver you out of our hands—what think you now ?’—Poor Zion ! *She spreadeth forth her hands, but there is*

none to comfort her. The Lord hath commanded, that her adversaries should be round about her—her captive sons can only remember Jerusalem, and weep! Alas, how can they sing the Lord's song in a strange land!

But is there no help from above? is there no physician there? Yes, the God whom Babel derides, but Judah adores, looks down, and sees their affliction. To his disheartened friends in this situation, he addresses himself, saying, *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God,*—as if he should say, 'For a season you must walk by faith, and not by sight; but trust me, that season shall soon be over. Seventy years, and Babylon shall fall, and Judah return!'* By these declarations, the church was encouraged in her captivity, and furnished with an answer to her insulting foes:—yea, and what is wonderful, breaks forth into one of the Lord's songs in a strange land! (Hearken, O Babel, to one of the songs of Zion!) *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness the Lord will be a light unto me! I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her that said unto me, where is the Lord thy God?†*

This is encouraging to us *as churches*, and *as ministers*. We have, in many cases, to walk in darkness, and have no light, and to go on in our ministrations in a great degree like the prophet Isaiah, lamenting that so few have believed our report, so few to whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed. When death removes worthy characters, we must sometimes live and lament to see their places unoccupied by others of the like character: and what is worse, instead of increase by Christ's conquests, we must sometimes live to see a decrease

* If. l. 10. † Mic. vii. 8, 9, 10.

decrease by the conquests of the evil one! Many a faithful minister has had to preach year after year, till either by public scandals, or private disgusts, many of his people have gone off, and walked no more with him. But let him then remember the testimony of God, *Him that honoureth me will I honour*;*—let him go on, and faithfully discharge his duty, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear—let him, and those that are with him, walk by faith, and not by sight. It often proves, that after such a night of weeping, comes a morning of rejoicing. Let us not be discouraged; better breath than our's has been spent apparently in vain. Our Lord himself seemed to labour in vain, and to spend his strength for nought; but he comforted himself in this, (herein leaving us an example) *Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.*†

This may encourage and direct us in larger concerns; concerns which respect the *whole interest of Christ* in the world. If we compare the present state of things, or even the past, with the glorious prophecies in the word of God, surely we cannot think, that all is yet accomplished. By these prophecies, the christian church is encouraged to look for great things at some period or other of her existence. She is taught to look for a time when *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*—when *a nation shall be born at once*—when *the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*—and *he shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.*‡ But surely for the present, though great things upon the whole have been done in the world, yet nothing like this has ever come to pass. Instead of the world being conquered, what a great part yet continues to stand it out against him. Heathenism, Mahometanism, Popery, and Infidelity, how extensive still their influence! In all probability, not a single country, city, town, village, or congregation, has ever yet been brought wholly to submit to

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Christ!

* 1 Sam. ii. 30

† Is. xlix. 5.

‡ Is. xi. 9. lxvi. 8. Rev. xi. 15. Ps. lxxii. 8.

Christ! Nay, is it not very rare for him to find in any one so many real friends as to make even a majority in his favour? May not the christian church, then, for the present, adopt that language, *We have been with child, we have as it were brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen?** What then? shall we despair? God forbid! The vision is yet for an appointed time, at the end it shall speak, and not lie, though it tarry wait for it, it will surely come, it will not tarry—and mean while, *the just shall live by faith.*†

Let us take encouragement in the present day o small things by looking forward, and hoping for better days. Let this be attended with *earnest* and *united* prayer to him by whom Jacob must arise. A life of faith will ever be a life of prayer. O brethren, let us pray hard for an outpouring of God's Spirit upon our ministers and churches, and not upon those only of our own connexion and denomination, but upon *all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's!*

V. *Our hope of a BETTER STATE WHEN THIS IS OVER is built on faith in God's testimony.*—We have no sort of evidence but this that any such state exists. We cannot see any thing of the kind, or aught from which we can infer it. We cannot learn it from any of our senses. Reason itself could never have found it out. Reason might have taught us the idea of a *future state*, but not of a future state of *bliss*. Though much might be argued from the fitness of things, to prove that man is not made barely for the present life, yet nothing could be drawn from thence to prove that *rebels* against the supreme being should live in a state of eternal felicity:—no, for this we are wholly indebted to the *word of the promise*. Hence faith is said to be *the SUBSTANCE, GROUND, or FOUNDATION of things hoped for.*‡ Affording us not only a firm persuasion of their reality, but a kind of *present possession* of them. Influenced by this we become

* Il. xxvi. 8. † Hab. ii. 3, 4. ‡ Heb. xi. 1.

become dead to the present world, and so in a fort overcome it, and at length *sit down with Christ in his throne*; as he also hath overcome, and is set down with his Father in his throne. §

We will now, in the *second* place, add a few words on the *importance* of such a life.—If, all things considered, it would have been best for us to have always *seen* our way before us, to have been guided, so to speak, with our own eyes, and not to have *implicitly* followed the directions of God, no doubt so it would have been. But he who perfectly, and at once saw the beginning and end of all things, judged otherwise. With the highest wisdom, no doubt, he formed the resolution, *the just shall live by faith*. It may be impossible for us, in the present state, to find out all the reasons for this resolution, but two or three seem to present themselves to view.

1. Such a life brings *great glory to God*.—Confidence is universally a medium of honour. To confide in a fellow-creature, puts honour upon him in the account of others, and affords a pleasure to himself; especially if he be a wise and upright character, as it gives him an opportunity of proving his wisdom and fidelity. Though the great God cannot be *made* more honourable than he is by any thing than we can do, yet his honour may by this be made more *apparent*. We honour him so far as we form just conceptions of him in our own minds, and act so as to give just representations of him to others. God is graciously pleased to declare that *he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy*—and why? surely, amongst other things, for that it gives him occasion to display the glory of his grace. And as he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy, and rely upon it; so he takes pleasure in ordering things so that we may be put to the trial whether we will rely on him or not. It was this induced him to lead Israel through the wilderness, rather than by the ready road to Canaan. He knew they would

would be *is fact* dependent upon him, let them be where they would; but they would not be *sensible* of that dependence, nor have so much opportunity of entirely trusting him in any way as this, and so it would not be so much for the glory of his great name. He therefore would lead a whole nation, with all their little ones, into an inhospitable desert, where was scarcely a morsel of meat to eat, and in many places not a drop of water to drink—a land of deserts and of pits, of scorpions, and fiery flying serpents—here, if any where, they must be sensibly dependent on God. They must be fed and preserved immediately from heaven itself, and that by miracle, or all perish in a few days! Here God must appear to be what he was—here mercy and truth must appear to go with them indeed!

What an opportunity had they afforded them to have walked those forty years by faith, what grounds for an entire confidence were afforded them; but alas, their faithless hearts perverted their way, and in the end proved their ruin! Ten times they tempted God in the desert, till at length he swore concerning that generation, that for their unbelief they should die in the wilderness, and never enter his rest. Few, if any, besides *Joshua* and *Caleb*, would dare to trust him, notwithstanding all his wonders, and all his mercies! They, however, for their part, took hold of his strength, and thought themselves *able*, having God on their side, to encounter any thing! Their spirit was to walk by faith and not by sight, and herein it is easy to see how they glorified God.

O brethren! let THE GLORY OF GOD lie near our hearts! Let it be dearer to us than our dearest delights! Herein consists the criterion of true love to him. Let us, after the noble example of *Joshua* and *Caleb*, FOLLOW THE LORD FULLY.* Let us approve of every thing that tends to glorify him. Let us be reconciled to his conduct, who *suffereth us to hunger that*

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we may know that man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.† If he bring us into hard and difficult situations, situations to an eye of sense impossible to endure, remember it is that he may give us an opportunity of glorifying him, by trusting him in the dark. The more difficult the trial, the more glory to him that bears us through, and the greater opportunity is afforded us for proving that we can indeed trust him with *all* our concerns; that we can trust him when we cannot see what he is about.

Those very much dishonour God who profess to trust him for another world, but in the common difficulties of this are perpetually murmuring, peevish, and distrustful. How different was it with *Abraham* in offering up his son *Isaac*. What, offer up *Isaac*! his son, his only son of promise! Is not the *Messiah* to spring out of his loins? What will become of all the nations of the earth who are to be *blessed* in him?—How natural and excusable might such questions have seemed; much more so than most of our objections to the divine conduct. Sense, in this case, had it been consulted, must have entered a thousand protests. But the *father of the faithful* consulted not with flesh and blood, not doubting but God knew what he was about, if he did not.—(O that we may prove ourselves the *children* of faithful *Abraham*.) *Against hope*, in appearance, *he believed in hope* of divine all-sufficiency, fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform—he stretched his obedient arm, nor had he recalled it had not heaven interposed—he was *strong in faith*, GIVING GLORY TO GOD.

2. It is productive of *great good to us*.—The glory of God, and the good of those that love him (thanks be to his name!) always go together. It is equally to their benefit as to his honour, for instance, to *lie low* before him, and to feel their *entire dependance* upon him. It is essential to the real happiness of an intelligent creature

† Deut. viii. 3.

creature to be in its *proper place*, and to take a complacency in being so. But nothing tends more to cultivate these dispositions than God's determining that we at present should walk by faith, and not by sight. Faith, in the whole of it, tends more than a little to abase the fallen creature; and to *walk* by faith, which is as much as to acknowledge that we are blind, and must see with the eyes of another, is very humbling. The objects of our desire being frequently for a time with-held, and we, during those times, reduced to such situations wherein we can *see* no help, and so obliged to repose our trust in God, contributes more than a little to make us feel our dependance upon him. *Agur* saw that a constant fulness of this world was unfriendly to a spirit of entire dependance upon God, therefore he prayed *Give me not riches—lest I be full and deny thee.** Whatever tends to *bumble* and *try* us, tends to *do us good in the latter end.* †

Great and wonderful is the *consolation* that such a walk affords. In all the vicissitudes of life, or horrors of death, nothing can cheer and fortify the mind like this. By faith in an unseen world we can endure injuries without revenge, affliction without fainting, and losses without despair. Let the nations of the earth dash, like potsherds, one against another; yea, let nature itself approach towards its final dissolution; let her groan, as being ready to expire, and sink into her primitive nothing; still the believer lives! His all is not on board that vessel! His chief inheritance lies in another soil!

‘ His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl!’

3. It will *make vision the sweeter*—It affords a great pleasure when we make a venture of any kind, to find ourselves at last not disappointed. If a considerate man embark his all on board a vessel, and himself with it, he may have a thousand fears ere he reaches the end of his voyage; but should he, after numberless dangers, safely arrive,

* Prov. xxx. 9.

† Deut. viii. 16.

arrive, and find it not only answer, but far exceed his expectations, his joy will be then far greater than if he had run no hazard at all. What he has gained will seem much sweeter than if it had fallen to him in a way that had cost him nothing. Thus believers venture their all in the hands of Christ, persuaded that he is able to keep that which they have committed to him against that day. To find at last that they have not confided in him in vain, yea, that their expectations are not only answered, but infinitely outdone, will surely enhance the bliss of heaven. The remembrance of our dangers, fears, and sorrows, will enable us to enjoy the heavenly state, with a degree of happiness impossible to have been felt if those dangers, fears, and sorrows had never existed.

My hearers ! We all of us either live by faith or by sight ; either upon things heavenly or things earthly. If upon the former, let us go forward ; on the word of a God, everlasting glory is before us ! But if upon the latter, alas, our store will be soon exhausted ! All these dear delights are but the brood of time, a brood that will soon take to themselves wings, and with her that cherished them, fly away. Oh, my hearers ! is it not common for many of you to suppose that they who live by faith in the enjoyments of a world to come, live upon mere imaginations ? But are ye not mistaken ? 'Tis your enjoyments, and not their's, that are imaginary. Pleasures, profits, honours, what are they ? The whole form only a kind of *ideal* world, a sort of splendid *show*, like that in a dream, which when you awake is all gone ! At most 'tis but a *fashion*, and a fashion that *passeth* away.* To grasp it is to grasp a shadow, and to feed upon it is to feed upon the wind. O that you may turn away your eyes from beholding these vanities, and look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the substantial realities beyond the grave, for your never-failing portion !

But if not, if you still prefer this world with its enjoyments,

* 1 Cor. vii. 31.

joyments, to those which are heavenly, how just will it be for the Lord Jesus to say to you at the last great day, ' *Depart!* Depart, ye have had your reward! Ye have had your choice, what would you have? You never chose me for your portion—you in effect said of me and my interest, we will have no part in David, nor inheritance in the son of Jesse; see to thyself, David.' —Ah, now, see to thyself, sinner!

Christians—ministers—brethren—all of us! let us realize the subject. Let us pray, and preach, and hear, and do every thing we do with eternity in view! Let us deal much with Christ and invisible realities. Let us, whenever called, freely deny ourselves for his sake, and trust him to make up the loss. Let us not faint under present difficulties, but consider them as opportunities afforded us to glorify God. Let us be ashamed that we derive our happiness so much from things below, and so little from things above. In one word, let us fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life!



Upon a motion being made at the association at *Nottingham, June 3, 1784*, for meetings of prayer, for the revival of religion, and the extending of Christ's kingdom in the world, it was agreed, that in all our churches we would at least set apart an hour on the first Monday evening in every calendar month, to meet together in our respective places, as proposed at the end of the *Circular Letter*. It has since been thought desirable by some of the ministers, that something should be published by way of persuasion, to excite us to real earnestness in this important business. At their request the following thoughts are submitted to consideration.*

P E R S U A S I V E S

T O A

General UNION in extraordinary PRAYER,

F O R T H E

REVIVAL and EXTENT

O F

R E A L R E L I G I O N.

Addressed to the churches in the *Leicestershire* and *Northamptonshire* association, and to any others who love and long for the coming of Christ's blessed kingdom, and whose hearts may be inclined to unite in seeking its welfare.

Christian brethren!

THE business, for the promotion of which these few hints are with all due respect recommended to your candid attention, is such, that we are persuaded
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* These *prayer-meetings* have been kept up in our churches now for nearly seven years, during which period several other churches of different denominations have united in observing them. Brother

you will chearfully unite in it. Indeed it would be unfriendly in us to suspect your readiness to so good a work. Nevertheless, considering the backwardness and inattention common to us all in this world, you will not think it superfluous in this case to urge a few motives, if it might be to stimulate us to wrestle hard with God. We wish you then, and ourselves with you, seriously to attend to the following considerations.

I. Consider *Christ's readiness to hear and answer prayer, especially on these subjects.* We are greatly mistaken if we imagine our Lord Jesus takes no pleasure in his own work, but is loath to prosper it, only that he is persuaded by us, or does it to oblige us. He takes infinitely more pleasure in it than we do; and when he does it in answer to our prayers, it is that we may be encouraged, and that his favours may be thankfully received. Christ takes care to let us know how ready he is to hear prayer, especially in behalf of his own cause, in that he *directs* us to pray for these blessings; yea he even *commands* us to pray for the coming of his kingdom before we ask for our *daily bread*;—and to *seek first THE KINGDOM OF GOD, and his righteousness*, promising that *all other things shall be added unto us.**

Indeed it may well be supposed that Christ's heart is in this work, for he laid down his life as a ground whereon to rear the structure. The foundation of this glorious kingdom was laid in blood, not like too many earthly kingdoms, in the blood of the conquered, but of the conqueror. Yes, he died that he might live and *see* a numerous *seed* of converts; and might *prolong his days*, or lengthen out his holy and happy kingdom. When he ascended into heaven, and took the government of all worlds into his hands, it was with a view to the carrying

Sutcliff, of Olney, has re-published President EDWARDS's Humble Attempt to promote Union in Prayer for the Revival of Religion; in order to excite a more general agreement in this needful practice, that excellent pamphlet has been recommended by our own and by the Western Baptist Association. It is sold by Asb, Little Tower-street; Button, Newington-Causeway; and Vernor, in Birchin-lane. Price Nine-pence. * Matt. vi. 10, 33.

carrying on of this blessed cause. He became *head over all things*, but it was *to the church*, that he might cause every thing to subserve her welfare.

And now having thus died to lay the foundation of his kingdom, and thus long presided over all the kingdoms of the world to ripen things for it, it would be very strange indeed if he were indifferent about it! So far from that, nothing seems to lie so near his heart. He is pleased to look upon the conversion of sinners as *reward* enough for all his sorrows, as sufficient to make him forget all his trials! As a woman, as soon as she is delivered from travail, remembers no more the anguish for joy that a man child is born into the world, so it is said *he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be SATISFIED!* Yes, christians, so far is he from being reluctant to grant us these requests, that he is pleased in these matters not only to *command us to ask*, but to represent himself as *waiting to be gracious*, yea as being *at our command*, as ready to bestow these mercies whenever we shall earnestly pray for them. *Thus saith the Lord, the holy one of Israel,—ask me of things to come concerning my sons; and concerning the work of my hands command ye me!* See how intent he is upon what concerns his *sons*, and the *work of his hands*. O let us not be backward on our part—If this will *satisfy* him, let him be satisfied! If he is thus ready to hear; let us not be backward to ask!

II. Consider *what the Lord has done in times past, and that in answer to prayer*. When Israel, who was God's church at that time, was in Egypt, and things looked very dark indeed, they cried, and the Lord heard their cry, and *came down to deliver them*. Their deliverance was the extending of Christ's kingdom, and God overthrew Pharaoh and all his host for setting themselves against it. The church in after ages, when in her low estate at Babylon, is represented as making use of this as a plea with God. Thus they cry to him, *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord—awake as in ancient days, in the generations of old—art thou not it that*

bath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which bath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep, and bath made the depth of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? And was their prayer answered? Yes, the Lord presently replied—‘ I am the Lord thy God that divided the sea, whose waves roared, THE LORD OF HOSTS is his name!’—Yea, as a kind of echo to their request, ‘ Awake, awake, stand up O Jerusalem which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury—Thus saith thy Lord JEHOVAH, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, behold I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of my fury, and thou shalt no more drink it again. See Isa. li. 9, 17, 22.

While Judah groaned beneath Babel’s yoke, Daniel set his face three times a day towards Jerusalem; at length his prayers and supplications are heard, and an angel is sent to comfort him, yea and to inform him that *at the beginning* of his supplications the commandment in favour of Judah came forth. And now God’s conduct towards Pharoah and his host shall be acted over again towards Belshazzar and his. Yes, he not only gave Egypt and Ethiopia, but Babylon for their ansom.

The church of God was reduced exceedingly low just before the coming of Christ, but what was the conduct of those few that were on God’s side? Some of them are distinguished by the character of those who *LOOKED FOR redemption in Jerusalem*, and others are said to have *continued in prayers night and day*. At length, through the the tender mercy of God, their prayers were answered, and *the day spring on high visited them!*

Just before that great out-pouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the church was in a low and disconsolate condition, having lost Christ’s personal presence: however, they united with one accord in ardent prayer, in an upper room, to the number of about an hundred and twenty. Presently, and their light brake forth as the morning—a little one becomes

a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. Thousands are converted by a single sermon, and satan falls before the gospel of Christ like lightning from heaven. — Might we not make the same use of these glorious works of God, with some others in that day, as Judah did in Babylon of what God had done for them in Egypt? Might we not plead now with Christ, ‘*Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! awake, as in the ancient days! art thou not it that didst cut the foe when hanging on the cross, that didst wound his interest in the day of pentecost?*’ And may we not plead that as God destroyed Babylon and delivered his church, so he would destroy the power and principles of mystical Babylon? He preserved a people, namely, the *Waldenses*, who in the worst of times bowed not the knee to the image of this idol, and when they were nearly exterminated by persecution, raised up a set of men at the reformation who gave it a deadly wound, a wound which it has never recovered to this day. O let us pray to the Lord Jesus that the work may be carried on—that *anticrist* may be consumed with the spirit of his mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of his coming!—that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and that he may reign for ever and ever.

III. *Let the present religious state of the world be considered to this end.* Christianity has not yet made its way, even in name, over *one-fifth* part of the world. Out of about 730 millions who are supposed to inhabit our globe, not above 122 millions profess the christian name; all the rest are heathens, jews, or mahometans; and of those who do profess it, the far greater part are either of the apostate *church of Rome*, or of the *Greek church*, which is nearly as corrupt. Add to this, what great numbers of real heathens abound in the christian lands, and unbelievers even in the congregations of the faithful. Surely it is high time for us to awake out of sleep, and to send our united cries to heaven in behalf of our fellow-creatures!

Of those who are under heathen darkness, some are civilized, but others still remain the most barbarous and uncultivated, killing, yea some of them, even eating one another! Great numbers, we are sorry to add, groan under the hand of tyranny and thralldom from nations who bear the christian name! O, let the iniquities practised in both the *Indies* rouse us to pray for the universal spread of Christ's Kingdom. Poor souls, millions of them are *doubly* enslaved! They are enslaved to European oppression on the one hand, and their own superstition on the other. O, let us pray for the time when Christ shall break the yoke of both; when oppression shall cease from the earth, and idolatry disappear as the thick darkness before the rising sun!

The state of religion in the *christian world* wears in some respects a melancholy, in others a hopeful aspect; both concur to shew the necessity of prayer. Real vital holiness, it is to be feared, has of late more than a little lost ground. There has been some considerable work done for God within these last fifty years, particularly in *Britain, Holland, and America*; and it is to be hoped something of this is still going forward; yet of late years it seems much to have declined. We seem, in a great degree, to have lost that spirit of earnest prayer and unwearied diligence that accompanied those out-pourings of God's Spirit. If the Spirit of God should have been grieved, and so have in a great degree departed from us, is it any wonder? While the doctrine of his blessed influence is so much abused on the one hand, by the most criminal indulgences in carnality and sloth; and almost denied on the other, by many who have sunk into such a spirit, and such views of things, as if they hardly thought there was an Holy Ghost, can it be made a wonder if he return to his place, till we learn by woful experience our need of him? These things look *melancholy*—O, let us pray that God would raise up amongst us a set of men to preach his gospel—men who shall be endued with *an unction from the Holy One*—men possessed of an hearty love to Christ and souls—in one word, *men of God*. Nor let us forget
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to pray for those that are already raised up, that they may be inspired with additional ardour ; and what is more than all, that all our labours may be crowned with divine success!

Some things in a providential way, on the other hand, must be said to wear a *hopeful* aspect. Liberty of conscience has obtained considerably of late in the German dominions, and is enjoyed in the fullest extent in the United States of North-America, which probably will in time become a very considerable Empire.* This certainly affords great *opportunity* for the servants of God to labour after the conversion of souls. It is a kind of an *open door* to them. O, let us pray that all the friends of God, and especially his ministers, may have an heart to embrace these opportunities, and may be blessed in the use of all possible means for the propagation of the gospel.

IV. Consider *what God has promised to do for his church in times to come*. For an absolute impossibility we can have no hope, and for what God hath declared shall never come to pass, we can have no warrant to pray ; but when we pray for the spread of Christ's kingdom, our object is clogged with neither of these difficulties. On the contrary, it is accompanied with the strongest assurances of success. Let us not imagine that God has yet done all he intends to do for his church ; or that Christ has yet seen of the travail of his soul so as to be *satisfied*. Besides the various promises referred to in the foregoing sermon, the first setting up of Christ's kingdom is compared to a *little stone*, cut out of a mountain without hands, but which should in time break in pieces all the rest, and become a *great mountain*, and FILL THE WHOLE EARTH.† The king himself compared this his blessed kingdom in its infancy to a *grain of mustard-seed*, the least of all seeds, but when grown is the *greatest of all herbs* : implying, no doubt, that his kingdom in its beginning was the most apparently weak and

* It might now be added, the same principles obtain in *France*.

† Dan. ii. 35.

and despicable of any kingdom ; but before it should be finished it should be the greatest, most glorious, and extensive of all the kingdoms that were ever set up—greater than that of *Alexander* himself, and more durable than that of *Rome*.† In the same place he compares it to a *little leaven* which a woman put into three measures of meal till *the whole was leavened*. Glorious thought ! Christ has been leavening the world for many an hundred years, by the preaching of the gospel ; and yet, awful to think, what a great part of it continues unleavened to this day ! But O, blessed be God, it shall not be given up till **THE WHOLE IS LEAVENED !** Forlorn as the state of the heathen world is, our Lord Jesus has *asked them for his inheritance*, and he will have them, even **THE UTMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH for his possession !**‡ O, blessed period ! when Jew and Gentile, the fair European and the sun-burnt African, with men of every other description, shall all unite to serve the Lord.

Must it not be very reviving to see those branches, that have been so long broken off the olive tree because of unbelief, grafted in again ?—to see them return, and with the bitter tears of reflection *seek the Lord their God, AND DAVID THEIR KING, and fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days ?* § Yes, verily, *the receiving of them back again shall be to the Gentiles like life from the dead !* || Then shall they be restored to their own land, and no more be exposed to the hostile attacks of quarrelsome neighbours as heretofore, but *Israel shall be with Egypt and with Assyria a blessing in the midst of the land ; whom Jehovah God of Hosts shall bless, saying, blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.* ¶ Then these glorious things spoken of the city of God, in the 87th psalm, shall be accomplished.—We shall see *Rabab and Babylon, Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia*, given to the church. *Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God !* * O what encouragement is here to pray ! How long these things will be
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† Matt. xiii. 31, 32, 33. ‡ Ps. ii. 8. § Hos. iii. 5.
|| Rom. xi. 15. ¶ Isai. xix. 23, 24. * Ps. lxxiii. 31.

we know not; but this we know, we are nearer by above *two thousand four hundred years* than the church was in *Isaiab's* time, and even then they that *made mention of Jehovah* were charged, saying, *Keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth!* *

V. *If we have any regard to the welfare of our countrymen, connexions, and friends, let that stimulate us in this work.* Let us remember we have not only heathens, and Jews, and others abroad to pray for, but few of us are wholly unconnected with heathen neighbours, heathen relations, or stubborn and unbelieving children. Let these be borne in the arms of prayer before the Lord. Though they can *claim* no pity from God, yet they have a right to our's, because we were in the same condition. Let our pity then be extended to those who have none for themselves, and our prayers ascend for such who as yet call not upon God's name. Though there be no reason why God should save our children, relations, or friends, before others, yet there is a reason why *we should seek* their salvation before others, because they are particularly put under our care, or stand in connexion with us.

To neglect to carry our children to Christ for a blessing, from want of love, if such a thing could be in a good man, would be more cruel than the ostrich in the wilderness! So were it possible for a christian to be amongst wicked neighbours, and wicked relations, and seeing he is safe himself, care nothing about them, surely he must be beside himself! How unlike would this be to the spirit of his Lord and Saviour—he wept over those who wept not for themselves! O christians, for your country's sake, your neighbours sake, your friends sake, yea your enemies sake, as well as for the honour of Christ, seek the welfare of Zion, and pray for the extending of his kingdom in the world!

VI. Consider, *what is requested is so very small.* The Lord.

* Isai. lxii. 7.

Lord does not ask us in this case for our silver or our gold, which if he did, it were but a trifle to give—He does not require us to sacrifice our lives, families, or friends in support of his cause, which if he did, it is no more than millions of the best men that ever the world saw, have complied with;—but he only says, ‘*Give me thine heart!*’ Seek the prosperity of his interest who died for yours! of that interest with which your own is so inseparably united! Yea of that interest which is your own, for Christ and you have no separate interests.

As to the *times* that are proposed, nothing can be less burdensome than *once in a month*——but what did I say? *burdensome?*—God forbid that any employment of this sort should ever prove a burden! It is hoped it will be attended to as a *privilege* rather than merely as a duty. It is hoped that christians will feel a pleasure, and find a benefit in these meetings, that will induce them of their own accord to meet together more frequently than this proposes, either on Lord’s day mornings, or on any convenient opportunities, for the same most desirable purposes.

VII, and lastly. *It will not be in vain, whatever be the immediate and apparent issue of it.* Could we but heartily unite to make a real earnest effort, there is great reason to hope great good might follow. Whenever those glorious out-pourings of God’s Spirit shall come, all over the world, no doubt it will be in answer to the prayers of his people.—But suppose we should never live to see those days, still our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. To say the least of it, God would be glorified, and that would be no little thing. It would convey this piece of Intelligence to the world, that God has yet some hearty friends in it, and who will continue to pray to him in the darkest times. And if, as by David’s building the house, he is not pleased to grant our requests, yet he will take it well at our hands—and who can be said to have lost his labour who obtains the approbation of his God?——But this is not all,

all, our petitions may prove like seed in the earth, that shall not perish, though it may not spring up in our days. Thus the *prophets laboured, and the apostles entered into their labours*; * and what if we should be the sowers and our posterity the reapers? shall we think much at this? As great an honour at the last day perhaps may attend Isaiah, who hardly knew who had believed his report, as Peter, by whose sermon thousands were converted in an hour.—But neither is this all—There are different degrees of prosperity bestowed upon different parts of Zion, and these favours are often granted to those particular communities where most ardent prayer, love, and holiness prevail.—Add to all this, the *prosperity of our souls* as christians, is generally connected with an earnest pursuit of God's glory and Christ's kingdom. Consolation, like reputation, won't do to be sought directly and for its own sake. In that case it will flee from us. But let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to us. One great reason perhaps of so many christians going so destitute of divine comfort is because they care about scarcely any thing else; God therefore justly with-holds it from them. If they were more to seek his glory, and the extending of his kingdom in the world, they would find consolation come of its own accord. He that cannot lie, speaking of his church, hath said, **THEY SHALL PROSPER THAT LOVE HER.**

* John iv. 38.