

66 Kindles of Matthew Henry Commentary

Buy all the 66 Kindles for \$2.99 on a secure website

THE BIG BOOK OF CHRISTIAN QUOTES Kindle Edition

Let's Celebrate Advent Every Day!: Through Practicing God's Presence! Kindle Edition

Practicing The Presence Of God — The Best Rule of Holy Life Kindle Edition

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/BrokenByHim>

Let's Celebrate Advent Every Day!: Through Practicing God's Presence! Kindle Edition

More books you might be interested in checking out

The Art of Prophesying with The Calling of the Ministry

MEMORIES OF PATMOS: A Study Of The Apocalypse & Exposition Of The Revelation Of Jesus Christ

A Lamp Unto My Feet:366 Bible Verses & Prayers - Tools for the Believer's Daily Renewal [Kindle Edition] \$1.49
<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00AUN6DC6>

Practicing The Presence Of God \$0.99

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00DJYQSDC/>

The Sinful Desires Of The Flesh! \$1.49

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Sinful-Desires-Flesh-ebook/dp/B00EEPZAN4/>

Copyright © 2014 Public Domain Work

Kindle edited by: M. J. Andre
Fearless Eagle Publishing, Toronto, Ontario

Table of Contents

No table of contents entries found.

Preface

An Exposition, With Practical Observations, of The Epistle to the Hebrews

Concerning this epistle we must enquire, I. Into the divine authority of it; for this has been questioned by some, whose distempered eyes could not bear the light of it, or whose errors have been confuted by it; such as the Arians, who deny the Godhead and self-existence of Christ; and the Socinians, who deny his satisfaction; but, after all the attempts of such men to disparage this epistle, the divine original of it shines forth with such strong and unclouded rays that he who runs may read it is an eminent part of the canon of scripture. The divinity of the matter, the sublimity of the style, the excellency of the design, the harmony of this with other parts of scripture, and its general reception in the church of God in all ages-these are the evidences of its divine authority. II. As to the divine amanuensis or penman of this epistle, we are not so certain; it does not bear the name of any in the front of it, as the rest of the epistles do, and there has been some dispute among the learned to whom they should ascribe it. Some have assigned it to Clemens of Rome; other to Luke; and many to Barnabas, thinking that the style and manner of expression is very agreeable to the zealous, authoritative, affectionate temper that Barnabas appears to be of, in the account we have of him in the acts of the Apostles; and one ancient father quotes an expression out of this epistle as the words of Barnabas. But it is generally assigned to the apostle Paul; and some later copies and translations have put Paul's name in the title. In the primitive times it was generally ascribed to him, and the style and scope of it very well agree with his spirit, who was a person of a clear head and a warm heart, whose main end and endeavour it was to exalt Christ. Some think that the apostle Peter refers to this epistle, and proves Paul to be the penman of it, by telling the Hebrews, to whom he wrote, of Paul's having written to them, 2 Pt. 3:15. We read of no other epistle that he ever wrote to them but this. And though it has been objected that, since Paul put his name to all his other epistles, he would not have omitted it here; yet others have well answered that he, being the apostle of the Gentiles, who were odious to the Jews, might think fit to conceal his name, lest their prejudices against him might hinder them from reading and weighing it as they ought to do. III. As to the scope and design of this epistle, it is very evident that it was clearly to inform the minds, and strongly to confirm the judgment, of the Hebrews in the transcendent excellency of the gospel above the law, and so to take them off from the ceremonies of the law, to which they were so wedded, of which they were so fond, that they even doted on them, and those of them who were Christians retained too much of the old leaven, and needed to be purged from it. The design of this epistle was to persuade and press the believing Hebrews to a constant adherence to the Christian faith, and perseverance in it, notwithstanding all the sufferings they might meet with in so doing. In order to this, the apostle speaks much of the excellency of the author of the gospel, the glorious Jesus, whose honour he advances, and whom he justly prefers before all others, showing him to be all in all, and this in lofty strains of holy rhetoric. It must be acknowledged that there are many things in this epistle hard to be understood, but the sweetness we shall find therein will make us abundant amends for all the pains we take to understand it. And indeed, if we compare all the epistles of the New Testament, we shall not find any of them more replenished with divine, heavenly matter than this to the

Hebrews.

Chapter 1

In this chapter we have a twofold comparison stated: I. Between the evangelical and legal dispensation; and the excellency of the gospel above that of the law is asserted and proved (v. 1-3). II. Between the glory of Christ and that of the highest creatures, the angels; where the pre-eminence is justly given to the Lord Jesus Christ, and clearly demonstrated to belong to him (v. 4 to the end).

Verses 1-3

Here the apostle begins with a general declaration of the excellency of the gospel dispensation above that of the law, which he demonstrates from the different way and manner of God's communicating himself and his mind and will to men in the one and in the other: both these dispensations were of God, and both of them very good, but there is a great difference in the way of their coming from God. Observe,

I. The way wherein God communicated himself and his will to men under the Old Testament. We have here an account, 1. Of the persons by whom God delivered his mind under the Old Testament; they were *the prophets*, that is, persons chosen of God, and qualified by him, for that office of revealing the will of God to men. No man takes this honour to himself, unless called; and whoever are called of God are qualified by him. 2. The persons to whom God spoke by the prophets: *To the fathers*, to all the Old-Testament saints who were under that dispensation. God favoured and honoured them with much clearer light than that of nature, under which the rest of the world were left. 3. The order in which God spoke to men in those times that went before the gospel, those past times: he spoke to his ancient people *at sundry times and in divers manners*. (1.) *At sundry times*, or by *several parts*, as the word signifies, which may refer either to the several ages of the Old-Testament dispensation—the patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the prophetic; or to the several gradual openings of his mind concerning the Redeemer: to Adam, that the Messiah should come of the seed of the woman,—to Abraham, that he should spring from his loins,—to Jacob, that he should be of the tribe of Judah,—to David, that he should be of his house,—to Micah, that he should be born at Bethlehem,—to Isaiah, that he should be born of a virgin. (2.) *In divers manners*, according to the different ways in which God thought fit to communicate his mind to his prophets; sometimes by the *illapses* of his Spirit, sometimes by *dreams*, sometimes by visions, sometimes by an audible voice, sometimes by legible characters under his own hand, as when he wrote the ten commandments on tables of stone. Of some of these different ways God himself gave an account in Num. 12:6-8, *If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses: with him I will speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches.*

II. God's method of communicating his mind and will under the New-Testament dispensation, these last days as they are called, that is, either towards the end of the world, or the end of the Jewish state. The times of the gospel are the last times, the gospel revelation is the last we are to expect from God. There was first the natural revelation; then the patriarchal, by dreams, visions, and voices; then the Mosaic, in the law given forth and written down; then the prophetic, in explaining the law, and giving clearer discoveries of Christ: but now we must expect no new revelation, but only more of the Spirit of Christ to help us

better to understand what is already revealed. Now the excellency of the gospel revelation above the former consists in two things:—

1. It is the final, the finishing revelation, given forth in the last days of divine revelation, to which nothing is to be added, but the canon of scripture is to be settled and sealed: so that now the minds of men are no longer kept in suspense by the expectation of new discoveries, but they rejoice in a complete revelation of the will of God, both preceptive and providential, so far as is necessary for them to know in order to their direction and comfort. For the gospel includes a discovery of the great events that shall befall the church of God to the end of the world.

2. It is a revelation which God has made by his Son, the most excellent messenger that was ever sent into the world, far superior to all the ancient patriarchs and prophets, by whom God communicated his will to his people in former times. And here we have an excellent account of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1.) The glory of his office, and that in three respects:—[1.] God hath appointed him to be heir of all things. As God, he was equal to the Father; but, as God—man and Mediator, he was appointed by the Father to be the heir of all things, the sovereign Lord of all, the absolute disposer, director, and governor of all persons and of all things, Ps. 2:6, 7. *All power in heaven and earth is given to him; all judgment is committed to him*, Mt. 28:18; Jn. 5:22. [2.] By him God made the worlds, both visible and invisible, the heavens and the earth; not as an instrumental cause, but as his essential word and wisdom. By him he made the old creation, by him he makes the new creature, and by him he rules and governs both. [3.] He upholds all things by the word of his power: he keeps the world from dissolving. *By him all things consist*. The weight of the whole creation is laid upon Christ: he supports the whole and all the parts. When, upon the apostasy, the world was breaking to pieces under the wrath and curse of God, the Son of God, undertaking the work of redemption, bound it up again, and established it by his almighty power and goodness. None of the ancient prophets sustained such an office as this, none was sufficient for it.

(2.) Hence the apostle passes to the glory of the person of Christ, who was able to execute such an office: *He was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, v. 3. This is a high and lofty description of the glorious Redeemer, this is an account of his personal excellency. [1.] He is, in person, the Son of God, the only-begotten Son of God, and as such he must have the same nature. This personal distinction always supposes one and the same nature. Every son of man is man; were not the nature the same, the generation would be monstrous. [2.] The person of the Son is the glory of the Father, shining forth with a truly divine splendour. As the beams are effulgent emanations of the sun, the father and fountain of light, Jesus Christ in his person is God manifest in the flesh, he is light of light, the true Shechinah. [3.] The person of the Son is the true image and character of the person of the Father; being of the same nature, he must bear the same image and likeness. In beholding the power, wisdom, and goodness, of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold the power, wisdom, and goodness, of the Father; for he hath the nature and perfections of God in him. *He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father*; that is, he hath seen the same Being. He that hath known the Son hath known the Father, Jn. 14:7-9. For the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son; the personal distinction is no other than will consist with essential union. This is the glory of the person of Christ; the fulness of the Godhead dwells, not typically, but really, in him.

(3.) From the glory of the person of Christ he proceeds to mention the glory of his grace; his condescension itself was truly glorious. The sufferings of Christ had this great honour in them, to be a full satisfaction for the sins of his people: *By himself he purged away our sins*, that is, by the proper innate merit of his death and bloodshed, by their infinite intrinsic value; as they were the sufferings of himself, he has made atonement for sin. Himself, the glory of his person and nature, gave to his sufferings such merit as was a sufficient reparation of honour to God, who had suffered an infinite injury and affront by the sins of men.

(4.) From the glory of his sufferings we are at length led to consider the glory of his exaltation: *When by himself he had purged away our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high*, at his Father's right hand. As Mediator and Redeemer, he is invested with the highest honour, authority, and activity, for the good of his people; the Father now does all things by him, and receives all the services of his people from him. Having assumed our nature, and suffered in it on earth, he has taken it up with him to heaven, and there it has the high honour to be next to God, and this was the reward of his humiliation.

Now it was by no less a person than this that God in these last days spoke to men; and, since the dignity of the messenger gives authority and excellency to the message, the dispensations of the gospel must therefore exceed, very far exceed, the dispensation of the law.

Verses 4-14

The apostle, having proved the pre-eminence of the gospel above the law from the pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus Christ above the prophets, now proceeds to show that he is much superior not only to the prophets, but to the angels themselves. In this he obviates an objection that the Jewish zealots would be ready to make, that the law was not only delivered by men, *but ordained by angels* (Gal. 3:19), who attended at the giving forth of the law, the hosts of heaven being drawn forth to attend the Lord Jehovah on that awful occasion. Now the angels are very glorious beings, far more glorious and excellent than men; the scripture always represents them as the most excellent of all creatures, and we know of no being but God himself that is higher than the angels; and therefore that law that was ordained by angels ought to be held in great esteem. To take off the force of this argument, the penman of this epistle proceeds to state the comparison between Jesus Christ and the holy angels, both in nature and office, and to prove that Christ is vastly superior to the angels themselves: *Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they*. Here observe,

I. The superior nature of Christ is proved from his superior name. The scripture does not give high and glorious titles without a real foundation and reason in nature; nor would such great things have been said of our Lord Jesus Christ if he had not been as great and excellent as those words import. When it is said that Christ was made so much better than the angels, we are not to imagine that he was a mere creature, as the angels are; the word *genomenos*, when joined with an adjective, is nowhere to be rendered *created*, and here may very well be read, *being more excellent*, as the *Syriac version* hath it. We read *ginestheµ ho Theos aleptheµs*—*let God be true*, not made so, but acknowledged to be so.

II. The superiority of the name and nature of Christ above the angels is declared in the holy scriptures, and to be deduced thence. We should have known little or nothing either of Christ or of the angels, without the scriptures; and we must therefore

be determined by them in our conceptions of the one and the other. Now here are several passages of scripture cited, in which those things are said of Christ that were never said of the angels.

1. It was said of Christ, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee* (Ps. 2:7), which may refer to his eternal generation, or to his resurrection, or to his solemn inauguration into his glorious kingdom at his ascension and session at the right hand of the Father. Now this was never said concerning the angels, and therefore by inheritance he has a more excellent nature and name than they.

2. It was said concerning Christ, but never concerning the angels, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son*; taken from 2 Sa. 7:14. Not only, "I am his Father, and he is my Son, by nature and eternal promanation;" but, "I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son, by wonderful conception, and this his son-ship shall be the fountain and foundation of every gracious relation between me and fallen man."

3. It is said of Christ, *When God bringeth his First-begotten into the world, let all the angels of God worship him*; that is, when he is brought into this lower world, at his nativity, let the angels attend and honour him; or when he is brought into the world above, at his ascension, to enter upon his mediatorial kingdom, or when he shall bring him again into the world, to judge the world, then let the highest creatures worship him. God will not suffer an angel to continue in heaven who will not be in subjection to Christ, and pay adoration to him; and he will at last make the fallen angels and wicked men to confess his divine power and authority and to fall before him. Those who would not have him to reign must then be brought forth and slain before him. The proof of this is taken out of Ps. 97:7, *Worship him, all you gods*, that is, "All you that are superior to men, own yourselves to be inferior to Christ in nature and power."

4. God has said concerning Christ, *Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever*, etc., v. 8–12. But of the angels he has only said that *he hath made them spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire*, v. 7. Now, upon comparing what he here says of the angels with what he says to Christ, the vast inferiority of the angels to Christ will plainly appear.

(1.) What does God say here of the angels? *He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire*. This we have in Ps. 104:4, where it seems to be more immediately spoken of the winds and lightning, but is here applied to the angels, whose agency the divine Providences makes use of in the winds, and in thunder and lightnings. Observe, [1.] The office of the angels: they are God's ministers, or *servants, to do his pleasure*. It is the glory of God that he has such servants; it is yet more so that he does not need them. [2.] How the angels are qualified for this service; he makes them spirits and a flame of fire, that is, he endows them with light and zeal, with activity and ability, readiness and resolution to do his pleasure: they are no more than what God has made them to be, and they are servants to the Son as well as to the Father. But observe,

(2.) How much greater things are said of Christ by the Father. Here two passages of scripture are quoted.

[1.] One of these is out of Ps. 45:6, 7, where God declares of Christ, *First*, His true and real divinity, and that with much pleasure and affection, not grudging him that glory: *Thy throne, O God*. Here one person calls another person God, *O God*. And, if God the Father declares him to be so, he must be really and truly so; for God calls persons and things as they are. And now let who will deny him to be essentially God at their peril, but let us own and honour him as God; for, if he had not been

God, he had never been fit to have done the Mediator's work nor to have worn the Mediator's crown. *Secondly*, God declares his dignity and dominion, as having a throne, a kingdom, and a sceptre of that kingdom. He has all right, rule, authority, and power, both as the God of nature, grace, and glory, and as Mediator; and so he is fully adequate to all the intents and purposes of his mediatorial kingdom. *Thirdly*, God declares the eternal duration of the dominion and dignity of Christ, founded upon the divinity of his person: *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, from everlasting to everlasting, through all the ages of time, maugre all the attempts of earth and hell to undermine and overthrow it, and through all the endless ages of eternity, when time shall be no more. This distinguishes Christ's throne from all earthly thrones, which are tottering, and will at length tumble down; but the throne of Christ shall be as the days of heaven. *Fourthly*, God declares of Christ the perfect equity of his administration, and of the execution of his power, through all the parts of his government: *A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom*, v. 8. He came righteously to the sceptre, and he uses it in perfect righteousness; the righteousness of his government proceeds from the righteousness of his person, from an essential eternal love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity, not merely from considerations of prudence or interest, but from an inward and immovable principle: *Thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity*, v. 9. Christ came to fulfil all righteousness, to bring in an everlasting righteousness; and he was righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works. He has recommended righteousness to men, and restored it among them, as a most excellent and amiable thing. He came to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin as a hateful as well as hurtful thing. *Fifthly*, God declares of Christ how he was qualified for the office of Mediator, and how he was installed and confirmed in it (v. 9): *Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*. 1. Christ has the name Messiah from his being anointed. God's anointing of Christ signifies both his qualifying him for the office of the Mediator with the Holy Spirit and all his graces, and likewise his inauguration of him into the office, as prophets, priests, and kings, were by anointing. *God, even thy God*, imports the confirmation of Christ in the office of Mediator by the covenant of redemption and peace, that was between the Father and the Son. God is the God of Christ, as Christ is man and Mediator. 2. This anointing of Christ was *with the oil of gladness*, which signifies both the gladness and cheerfulness with which Christ undertook and went through the office of Mediator (finding himself so absolutely sufficient for it), and also that joy which was set before him as the reward of his service and sufferings, that crown of glory and gladness which he should wear for ever after the suffering of death. 3. This anointing of Christ was above the anointing of his fellows: *God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*. Who are Christ's fellows? Has he any equals? Not as God, except the Father and Spirit, but these are not here meant. As man, however, he has his fellows, and as an anointed person; but his unction is beyond all theirs. (1.) Above the angels, who may be said to be his fellows, as they are the sons of God by creation, and God's messengers, whom he employs in his service. (2.) Above all prophets, priests, and kings, that ever were anointed with oil, to be employed in the service of God on earth. (3.) Above all the saints, who are his brethren, children of the same father, as he was a partaker with them of flesh and blood. (4.) Above all those who were related to him as man, above all the house of David, all the tribe of Judah, all his brethren and kinsmen in the flesh. All God's other anointed ones had only the Spirit in a certain measure; Christ had the Spirit above measure, without any limitation. None therefore goes through his work as Christ did, none

takes so much pleasure in it as Christ does; for he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.

[2.] The other passage of scripture in which is the superior excellence of Christ to the angels is taken out of Ps. 102:25–27, and is recited in v. 10–12, where the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus Christ is declared as it appears both in creating the world and in changing it.

First, In creating the world (v. 10): *And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands*. The Lord Christ had the original right to govern the world, because he made the world in the beginning. His right, as Mediator, was by commission from the Father. His right, as God with the Father, was absolute, resulting from his creating power. This power he had before the beginning of the world, and he exerted it in giving a beginning and being to the world. He must therefore be no part of the world himself, for then he must give himself a beginning. He was *pro pantoµn*—*before all things*, and *by him all things consist*, Col. 1:17. He was not only above all things in condition, but before all things in existence; and therefore must be God, and self-existent. He laid the foundations of the earth, did not only introduce new forms into pre-existent matter, but made out of nothing the foundations of the earth, the *primordia rerum*—*the first principles of things*; he not only founded the earth, but the heavens too are the work of his hands, both the habitation and the inhabitants, the hosts of heaven, the angels themselves; and therefore he must needs be infinitely superior to them.

Secondly, In changing the world that he has made; and here the mutability of this world is brought in to illustrate the immutability of Christ. Observe, 1. This world is mutable, all created nature is so; this world has passed through many changes, and shall pass through more; all these changes are by the permission and under the direction of Christ, who made the world (v. 11, 12): *They shall perish, they shall all wax old as doth a garment; as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed*. This our visible world (both the earth and visible heavens) is growing old. Not only men and beasts and trees grow old, but this world itself grows old, and is hastening to its dissolution; it changes like a garment, has lost much of its beauty and strength; it grew old betimes on the first apostasy, and it has been waxing older and growing weaker ever since; it bears the symptoms of a dying world. But then its dissolution will not be its utter destruction, but its change. Christ will fold up this world as a garment not to be abused any longer, not to be any longer so used as it has been. Let us not then set our hearts upon that which is not what we take it to be, and will not be what it now is. Sin has made a great change in the world for the worse, and Christ will make a great change in it for the better. *We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*. Let the consideration of this wean us from the present world, and make us watchful, diligent, and desirous of that better world, and let us wait on Christ to change us into a meetness for that new world that is approaching; we cannot enter into it till we be new creatures. 2. Christ is immutable. Thus the Father testifies of him, *Thou remainest, thy years shall not fail*. Christ is the same in himself, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, and the same to his people in all the changes of time. This may well support all who have an interest in Christ under all the changes they meet with in the world, and under all they feel in themselves. Christ is immutable and immortal: his years shall not fail. This may comfort us under all decays of nature that we may observe in ourselves or in our friends, though our flesh and heart fail and our days are hastening to an end. Christ lives to take care of us while we live, and of ours when we are gone, and this should quicken us all to make our interest

in him clear and sure, that our spiritual and eternal life may be hid with Christ in God.

III. The superiority of Christ to the angels appears in this that God never said to the angels what he has said to Christ, v. 13, 14.

1. What has God said to Christ? He has said, "*Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy footstool*, Ps. 110:1.

Receive thou glory, dominion, and rest; and remain in the administration of thy mediatorial kingdom until all thy enemies shall either be made thy friends by conversion or thy footstool." Note, (1.) Christ Jesus has his enemies (would one think it?), enemies even among men—enemies to his sovereignty, to his cause, to his people; such as will not have him to reign over them. Let us not think it strange then if we have our enemies. Christ never did any thing to make men his enemies; he has done a great deal to make them all his friends and his Father's friends, and yet he has his enemies. (2.) All the enemies of Christ shall be made his footstool, either by humble submission and entire subjection to his will casting themselves down at his feet, or by utter destruction; he shall trample upon those who continue obstinate, and shall trample over them. (3.) God the Father has undertaken for this, and he will see it done, yea, he will himself do it; and, though it be not done presently, it shall certainly be done, and Christ waits for it; and so must Christians wait till God has wrought all their works in them, for them, and by them. (4.) Christ shall go on to rule and reign till this be done; he shall not leave any of his great designs unfinished, he shall go on conquering and to conquer. And it becomes his people to go on in their duty, being what he would have them to be, doing what he would have them to do, avoiding what he would have them to avoid, bearing what he would have them to bear, till he make them conquerors and more than conquerors over all their spiritual enemies.

2. What has God said to the angels? He never said to them, as he said to Christ, *Sit you at my right hand*; but he has said of them here that *they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation*. Note, (1.) What the angels are as to their nature: they are spirits, without bodies or inclination to bodies, and yet they can assume bodies, and appear in them, when God pleases. They are spirits, incorporeal, intelligent, active, substances; they excel in wisdom and strength. (2.) What the angels are as to their office: they are ministering spirits. Christ, as Mediator, is the great minister of God in the great work of redemption. The Holy Spirit is the great minister of God and Christ in the application of this redemption. Angels are ministering spirits under the blessed Trinity, to execute the divine will and pleasure; they are the ministers of divine Providence. (3.) The angels are sent forth for this end—to minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation. Here observe, [1.] The description given of the saints—they are *heirs of salvation*; at present they are under age, heirs, not inheritors. They are heirs because they are children of God; *if children, then heirs*. Let us make sure that we are children by adoption and regeneration, having made a covenant-resignation of ourselves to God, and walking before him in a gospel-conversation, and then we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. [2.] The dignity and privilege of the saints—the angels are sent forth to minister for them. Thus they have done in attending and acting at the giving forth of the law, in fighting the battles of the saints, in destroying their enemies. They still minister for them in opposing the malice and power of evil spirits, in protecting and keeping their bodies, pitching their tents about theirs, instructing, quickening, and comforting their souls under Christ and the Holy Ghost; and thus they shall do in gathering all the saints together at the last day. Bless God for the ministration of angels, keep in God's way, and take the comfort of this promise, that he will *give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all*

your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your feet against a stone, Ps. 91:11, 12.

Chapter 2

In this chapter the apostle, I. Makes some application of the doctrine laid down in the chapter foregoing concerning the excellency of the person of Christ, both by way of exhortation and argument (v. 1-4). II. Enlarges further upon the pre-eminence of Christ above the angels (v. 5-9). III. Proceeds to remove the scandal of the cross (v. 10-15). IV. Asserts the incarnation of Christ, taking upon him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, and assigns the reason of his so doing (v. 16 to the end).

Verses 1-4

The apostle proceeds in the plain profitable method of doctrine, reason, and use, through this epistle. Here we have the application of the truths before asserted and proved; this is brought in by the illative particle *therefore*, with which this chapter begins, and which shows its connection with the former, where the apostle having proved Christ to be superior to the angels by whose ministry the law was given, and therefore that the gospel dispensation must be more excellent than the legal, he now comes to apply this doctrine both by way of exhortation and argument.

I. By way of exhortation: *Therefore we ought to give the more diligent heed to the things which we have heard*, v. 1. This is the first way by which we are to show our esteem of Christ and of the gospel. It is the great concern of every one under the gospel to give the most earnest heed to all gospel discoveries and directions, to prize them highly in his judgment as matters of the greatest importance, to hearken to them diligently in all the opportunities he has for that purpose, to read them frequently, to meditate on them closely, and to mix faith with them. We must embrace them in our hearts and affections, retain them in our memories, and finally regulate our words and actions according to them.

II. By way of argument, he adds strong motives to enforce the exhortation.

1. From the great loss we shall sustain if we do not take this earnest heed to the things which we have heard: *We shall let them slip*. They will leak, and run out of our heads, lips, and lives, and we shall be great losers by our neglect. Learn, (1.) When we have received gospel truths into our minds, we are in danger of letting them slip. Our minds and memories are like a leaky vessel, they do not without much care retain what is poured into them; this proceeds from the corruption of our natures, the enmity and subtlety of Satan (he steals away the word), from the entanglements and snares of the world, the thorns that choke the good seed. (2.) Those meet with an inconceivable loss who let gospel truths, which they had received, slip out of their minds; they have lost a treasure far better than thousands of gold and silver; the seed is lost, their time and pains in hearing lost, and their hopes of a good harvest lost; all is lost, if the gospel be lost. (3.) This consideration should be a strong motive both to our attention to the gospel and our retention of it; and indeed, if we do not well attend, we shall not long retain the word of God; inattentive hearers will soon be forgetful hearers.

2. Another argument is taken from the dreadful punishment we shall incur if we do not do this duty, a more dreadful punishment than those fell under who neglected and disobeyed the law, v. 2, 3. Here observe, (1.) How the law is described: it was the *word spoken by angels, and declared to be steadfast*. It was the word spoken by angels, because given by the

ministration of angels, they sounding the trumpet, and perhaps forming the words according to God's direction; and God, as judge, will make use of the angels to sound the trumpet a second time, and gather all to his tribunal, to receive their sentence, as they have conformed or not conformed to the law. *And this law is declared to be steadfast*; it is like the promise, *yea and amen*; it is truth and faithfulness, and it will abide and have its force whether men obey it or no; *for every transgression and disobedience will receive a just recompence of reward*. If men trifle with the law of God, the law will not trifle with them; it has taken hold of the sinners of former ages, and will take hold of sinners in all ages. God, as a righteous governor and judge, when he had given forth the law, would not let the contempt and breach of it go unpunished; but he has from time to time reckoned with the transgressors of it, and recompensed them according to the nature and aggravation of their disobedience. Observe, The severest punishment God ever inflicted upon sinners is no more than what sin deserves: it is *a just recompence of reward*; punishments are as just, and as much due to sin as rewards are to obedience, yea, more due than rewards are to imperfect obedience. (2.) How the gospel is described. It is salvation, a great salvation; so great salvation that no other salvation can compare with it; so great that none can fully express, no, nor yet conceive, how great it is. It is a great salvation that the gospel discovers, for it discovers a great Saviour, one who has manifested God to be reconciled to our nature, and reconcilable to our persons; it shows how we may be saved from so great sin and so great misery, and be restored to so great holiness and so great happiness. The gospel discovers to us a great sanctifier, to qualify us for salvation and to bring us to the Saviour. The gospel unfolds a great and excellent dispensation of grace, a new covenant; the great charter-deed and instrument is settled and secured to all those who come into the bond of the covenant. (3.) How sinning against the gospel is described: it is declared to be a *neglect of this great salvation*; it is a contempt put upon the saving grace of God in Christ, making light of it, not caring for it, not thinking it worth their while to acquaint themselves with it, not regarding either the worth of gospel grace or their own want of it and undone state without it; not using their endeavours to discern the truth of it, and assent to it, nor to discern the goodness of it, so as to approve of it, or apply it to themselves. In these things they discover a plain neglect of this great salvation. Let us all take heed that we be not found among those wicked wretched sinners who neglect the grace of the gospel. (4.) How the misery of such sinners is described: it is declared to be unavoidable (v. 3): *How shall we escape?* This intimates, [1.] That the despisers of this salvation are condemned already, under arrest and in the hands of justice already. So they were by the sin of Adam; and they have strengthened their bonds by their personal transgression. *He that believeth not is condemned already*, Jn. 3:18. [2.] There is no escaping out of this condemned state, but by accepting the great salvation discovered in the gospel; as far those who neglect it, the wrath of God is upon them, and it abides upon them; they cannot disengage themselves, they cannot emerge, they cannot get from under the curse. [3.] That there is a yet more aggravated curse and condemnation waiting for all those who despise the grace of God in Christ, and that this most heavy curse they cannot escape; they cannot conceal their persons at the great day, nor deny the fact, nor bribe the judge, nor break the prison. There is no door of mercy left open for them; there will be no more sacrifice for sin; they are irrecoverably lost. The unavoidableness of the misery of such is here expressed by way of question: *How shall we escape?* It is an appeal to universal reason, to the consciences of sinners themselves; it is a challenge to all their power and policy, to all their interest and alliances, whether

they, or any for them, can find out, or can force out, a way of escape from the vindictive justice and wrath of God. It intimates that the neglecters of this great salvation will be left not only without power, but without plea and excuse, at the judgment-day; if they be asked what they have to say that the sentence should not be executed upon them, they will be speechless, and self-condemned by their own consciences, even to a greater degree of misery than those fell under who neglected the authority of the law, or sinned without the law.

3. Another argument to enforce the exhortation is taken from the dignity and excellency of the person by whom the gospel began to be spoken (v. 3): *It began at first to be spoken by the Lord*, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Jehovah, the Lord of Life and glory, Lord of all, and as such possessed of unerring and infallible wisdom, infinite and inexhaustible goodness, unquestionable and unchangeable veracity and faithfulness, absolute sovereignty and authority, and irresistible power. This great Lord of all was the first who began to speak it plainly and clearly, without types and shadows as it was before he came. Now surely it may be expected that all will reverence this Lord, and take heed to a gospel that began to be spoken by one who spoke so as never *man spoke*.

4. Another argument is taken from the character of those who were witnesses to Christ and the gospel (v. 3, 4): *It was confirmed to us by those that heard him, God also bearing them witness*. Observe, (1.) The promulgation of the gospel was continued and confirmed by those who heard Christ, by the evangelists and apostles, who were eye and ear-witnesses of what Jesus Christ began both to do and to teach, Acts 1:1. These witnesses could have no worldly end or interest of their own to serve hereby. Nothing could induce them to give in their evidence but the Redeemer's glory, and their own and others' salvation; they exposed themselves by their testimony to the loss of all that was dear to them in this life, and many of them sealed it with their blood. (2.) *God himself bore witness* to those who were witnesses for Christ; he testified that they were authorized and sent by him to preach Christ and salvation by him to the world. And how did he bear them witness? Not only by giving them great peace in their own minds, great patience under all their sufferings, and unspeakable courage and joy (though these were witnesses to themselves), but he bore them witness *by signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his will*. [1.] *Signs*, signs of his gracious presence with them, and of his power working by them. [2.] *Wonders*, works quite beyond the power of nature, and out of the course of nature, filling the spectators with wonder and admiration, stirring them up to attend to the doctrine preached, and to enquire into it. [3.] *Divers miracles*, or mighty works, in which an almighty agency appeared beyond all reasonable controversy. [4.] *Gifts of the Holy Ghost*, qualifying, enabling, and exciting them to do the work to which they were called—*divisions or distributions of the Holy Ghost, diversities of gifts*, 1 Co. 12:4, etc. And all this *according to God's own will*. It was the will of God that we should have sure footing for our faith, and a strong foundation for our hope in receiving the gospel. As at the giving forth of the law there were signs and wonders, by which God testified the authority and excellency of it, so he witnessed to the gospel by more and greater miracles, as to a more excellent and abiding dispensation.

Verses 5-9

The apostle, having made this serious application of the doctrine of the personal excellency of Christ above the angels, now

returns to that pleasant subject again, and pursues it further (v. 5): *For to the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.*

I. Here the apostle lays down a negative proposition, including a positive one—That the state of the gospel-church, which is here called *the world to come*, is *not subjected to the angels*, but under the special care and direction of the Redeemer himself. Neither the state in which the church is at present, nor that more completely restored state at which it shall arrive when the prince of this world is cast out and the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdom of Christ, is left to the government of the angels; but Jesus Christ will take to him his great power, and will reign. He does not make that use of the ministration of angels to give the gospel as he did to give the law, which was the state of the old or antiquated world. This new world is committed to Christ, and put in absolute subjection to him only, in all spiritual and eternal concerns. Christ has the administration of the gospel church, which at once bespeaks Christ's honour and the church's happiness and safety. It is certain that neither the first creation of the gospel church, nor its after-edification or administration, nor its final judgment and perfection, is committed to the angels, but to Christ. God would not put so great a trust in his holy ones; his angels were too weak for such a charge.

II. We have a scripture—account of that blessed Jesus to whom the gospel world is put into subjection. It is taken from Ps. 8:4-6, *But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man, that thou visitest him?* etc. These words are to be considered both as applicable to mankind in general, and as applied here to the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. As applicable to mankind in general, in which sense we have an affectionate thankful expostulation with the great God concerning his wonderful condescension and kindness to the sons of men. (1.) In remembering them, or being mindful of them, when yet they had no being but in the counsels of divine love. The favours of God to men all spring up out of his eternal thoughts and purposes of mercy for them; as all our dutiful regards to God spring forth from our remembrance of him. God is always mindful of us, let us never be forgetful of him. (2.) In visiting them. God's purpose of favours for men is productive of gracious visits to them; he comes to see us, how it is with us, what we ail, what we want, what dangers we are exposed to, what difficulties we have to encounter; and by his visitation our spirit is preserved. Let us so remember God as daily to approach him in a way of duty. (3.) In making man the head of all the creatures in this lower world, the top-stone of this building, the chief of the ways of God on earth, and only a little lower than the angels in place, and respect to the body, while here, and to be made like the angels, and equal to the angels, at the resurrection of the just, Lu. 20:36. (4.) In crowning him with glory and honour, the honour of having noble powers and faculties of soul, excellent organs and parts of body, whereby he is allied to both worlds, capable of serving the interests of both worlds, and of enjoying the happiness of both. (5.) In giving him right to and dominion over the inferior creatures, which did continue so long as he continued in his allegiance and duty to God.

2. As applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the whole that is here said can be applied only to him, v. 8, 9. And here you may observe, (1.) What is the moving cause of all the kindness God shows to men in giving Christ for them and to them; and that is the grace of God. For *what is man?* (2.) What are the fruits of this free grace of God with respect to the gift of Christ for us and

to us, as related in this scripture-testimony. [1.] That God was mindful of Christ for us in the covenant of redemption. [2.] That God visited Christ on our account; and it was concluded between them that in the fulness of time Christ should come into the world, as the great archetypal sacrifice. [3.] That God had made him a little lower than the angels, in his being made man, that he might suffer and humble himself to death. [4.] That God crowned the human nature of Christ with glory and honour, in his being perfectly holy, and having the Spirit without measure, and by an ineffable union with the divine nature in the second person of the Trinity, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily; that by his sufferings he might make satisfaction, tasting death for every man, sensibly feeling and undergoing the bitter agonies of that shameful, painful, and cursed death of the cross, hereby putting all mankind into a new state of trial. [5.] That, as a reward of his humiliation in suffering death, he was crowned with glory and honour, advanced to the highest dignity in heaven, and having absolute dominion over all things, thus accomplishing that ancient scripture in Christ, which never was so accomplished or fulfilled in any mere man that ever was upon earth.

Verses 10-13

Having mentioned the death of Christ, the apostle here proceeds to prevent and remove the scandal of the cross; and this he does by showing both how it became God that Christ should suffer and how much man should be benefited by those sufferings.

I. How it became God that Christ should suffer: *For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings*, v. 10. Here,

1. God is described as the final end and first cause of all things, and as such it became him to secure his own glory in all that he did, not only to act so that he might in nothing dishonour himself, but so that he might from every thing have a revenue of glory.

2. He is declared to have acted up to this glorious character in the work of redemption, as to the choice both of the end and of the means.

(1.) In the choice of the end; and that was to bring many sons to glory in enjoying the glorious privileges of the gospel, and to future glory in heaven, which will be glory indeed, an exceeding eternal weight of glory. Here observe, [1.] We must be the sons of God both by adoption and regeneration, before we can be brought to the glory of heaven. Heaven is the inheritance; and only those that are the children are heirs of that inheritance. [2.] All true believers are the children of God: *to those that receive Christ he has granted the power and privilege of being the children of God, even to as many as believe on his name*, Jn. 1:12. [3.] Though the sons of God are but a few in one place and at one time, yet when they shall be all brought together it will appear that they are many. Christ is the first-born among many brethren. [4.] All the sons of God, now many soever they are, or however dispersed and divided, shall at length be brought together to glory.

(2.) In the choice of the means. In finding out such a person as should be the captain of our salvation; those that are saved must come to that salvation under the guidance of a captain and leader sufficient for that purpose; and they must be all enlisted under the banner of this captain; they must endure hardship as good soldiers of Christ; they must follow their captain, and

those that do so shall be brought safely off, and shall inherit great glory and honour. [2.] In making this captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings. God the Father made the Lord Jesus Christ the captain of our salvation (that is, he consecrated, he appointed him to that office, he gave him a commission for it), and he made him a perfect captain: he had perfection of wisdom, and courage, and strength, by the Spirit of the Lord, which he had without measure; he was made perfect through sufferings; that is, he perfected the work of our redemption by shedding his blood, and was thereby perfectly qualified to be a Mediator between God and man. He found his way to the crown by the cross, and so must his people too. The excellent Dr. Owen observes that the Lord Jesus Christ, being consecrated and perfected through suffering, has consecrated the way of suffering for all his followers to pass through unto glory; and hereby their sufferings are made necessary and unavoidable, they are hereby made honourable, useful, and profitable.

II. He shows how much they would be benefited by the cross and sufferings of Christ; as there was nothing unbecoming God and Christ, so there was that which would be very beneficial to men, in these sufferings. Hereby they are brought into a near union with Christ, and into a very endearing relation.

1. Into a near union (v. 11): *Both he that sanctifieth and those that are sanctified are all of one.* Observe, Christ is he that sanctifieth; he has purchased and sent the sanctifying Spirit; he is the head of all sanctifying influences. The Spirit sanctifieth as the Spirit of Christ. True believers are those who are sanctified, endowed with holy principles and powers, separated and set apart from mean and vile uses to high and holy uses and purposes; for so they must be before they can be brought to glory. Now Christ, who is the agent in this work of sanctification, and Christians, who are the recipient subjects, are all of one. How? Why, (1.) They are all of one heavenly Father, and that is God. God is the Father of Christ by eternal generation and by miraculous conception, of Christians by adoption and regeneration. (2.) They are of one earthly father, Adam. Christ and believers have the same human nature. (3.) Of one spirit, one holy and heavenly disposition; the same mind is in them that was in Christ, though not in the same measure; the same Spirit informs and actuates the head and all the members.

2. Into an endearing relation. This results from the union. And here first he declares what this relation is, and then he quotes three texts out of the Old Testament to illustrate and prove it.

(1.) He declares what this relation is: he and believers being all of one, he therefore is not ashamed to call them *brethren*.

Observe, [1.] Christ and believers are brethren; not only bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, but spirit of his spirit-brethren by the whole blood, in what is heavenly as well as in what is earthly. [2.] Christ is not ashamed to own this relation; he is not ashamed to call them brethren, which is wonderful goodness and condescension in him, considering their meanness by nature and vileness by sin; but he will never be ashamed of any who are not ashamed of him, and who take care not to be a shame and reproach to him and to themselves.

(2.) He illustrates this from three texts of scripture.

[1.] The first is out of Ps. 22:22, *I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.* This psalm was an eminent prophecy of Christ; it begins with his words on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Now here it is foretold, *First*, That Christ should have a church or *congregation* in the world, a company of

volunteers, freely willing to follow him. *Secondly*, That these should not only be brethren to one another, but to Christ himself. *Thirdly*, That he would declare his Father's name to them, that is, his nature and attributes, his mind and will: this he did in his own person, while he dwelt among us, and by his Spirit poured out upon his disciples, enabling them to spread the knowledge of God in the world from one generation to another, to the end of the world. *Fourthly*, That Christ would sing praise to his Father in the church. The glory of the Father was what Christ had in his eye; his heart was set upon it, he laid out himself for it, and he would have his people to join with him in it.

[2.] The second scripture is quoted from Ps. 18:2, *And again, I will put my trust in him*. That psalm sets forth the troubles that David, as a type of Christ, met with, and how he in all his troubles put his trust in God. Now this shows that besides his divine nature, which needed no supports, he was to take another nature upon him, that would want those supports which none but God could give. He suffered and trusted as our head and president. *Owen in locum*. His brethren must suffer and trust too.

[3.] The third scripture is taken from Isa. 8:18, *Behold, I and the children which God hath given me*. This proves Christ really and truly man, for parents and children are of the same nature. Christ's children were given him of the Father, in the counsel of his eternal love, and that covenant of peace which was between them. And they are given to Christ at their conversion. When they take hold of his covenant, then Christ receives them, rules over them, rejoices in them, perfects all their affairs, takes them up to heaven, and there presents them to his Father, *Behold, I and the children which thou hast given me*.

Verses 14-18

Here the apostle proceeds to assert the incarnation of Christ, as taking upon him not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham; and he shows the reason and design of his so doing.

I. The incarnation of Christ is asserted (v. 16): *Verily he took not upon him the nature of angels, but he took upon him the seed of Abraham*. He took part of flesh and blood. Though as God he pre-existed from all eternity, yet in the fulness of time he took our nature into union with his divine nature, and became really and truly man. He did not lay hold of angels, but he laid hold of the seed of Abraham. The angels fell, and he let them go, and lie under the desert, defilement, and dominion of their sin, without hope or help. Christ never designed to be the Saviour of the fallen angels; as their tree fell, so it lies, and must lie to eternity, and therefore he did not assume their nature. The nature of angels could not be an atoning sacrifice for the sin of man. Now Christ resolving to recover the seed of Abraham and raise them up from their fallen state, he took upon him the human nature from one descended from the loins of Abraham, that the same nature that had sinned might suffer, to restore human nature to a state of hope and trial, and all that accepted of mercy to a state of special favour and salvation. Now there is hope and help for the chief of sinners in and through Christ. Here is a price paid sufficient for all, and suitable to all, for it was in our nature. Let us all then know the day of our gracious visitation, and improve that distinguishing mercy which has been shown to fallen men, not to the fallen angels.

II. The reasons and designs of the incarnation of Christ are declared.

1. *Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he must take part of the same, and he made like his brethren*, v. 14, 15. For no higher nor lower nature than man's that had sinned could so suffer for the sin of man as to satisfy the justice of God,

and raise man up to a state of hope, and make believers the children of God, and so brethren to Christ.

2. He became man that he might die; as God he could not die, and therefore he assumed another nature and state. Here the wonderful love of God appeared, that, when Christ knew what he must suffer in our nature, and how he must die in it, yet he so readily took it upon him. The legal sacrifices and offerings God could not accept as propitiation. A body was prepared for Christ, and he said, *Lo! I come, I delight to do thy will.*

3. That *through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*, v. 14. The devil was the first sinner, and the first tempter to sin, and sin was the procuring cause of death; and he may be said to have the power of death, as he draws men into sin, the ways whereof are death, as he is often permitted to terrify the consciences of men with the fear of death, and as he is the executioner of divine justice, haling their souls from their bodies to the tribunal of God, there to receive their doom, and then being their tormentor, as he was before their tempter. In these respects he may be said to have had the power of death. But now Christ has so far destroyed him who had the power of death that he can keep none under the power of spiritual death; nor can he draw any into sin (the procuring cause of death), nor require the soul of any from the body, nor execute the sentence upon any but those who choose and continue to be his willing slaves, and persist in their enmity to God.

4. That he might deliver his own people from the slavish fear of death to which they are often subject. This may refer to the Old-Testament saints, who were more under a spirit of bondage, because life and immortality were not so fully brought to light as now they are by the gospel. Or it may refer to all the people of God, whether under the Old Testament or the New, whose minds are often in perplexing fears about death and eternity. Christ became man, and died, to deliver them from those perplexities of soul, by letting them know that death is not only a conquered enemy, but a reconciled friend, not sent to hurt the soul, or separate it from the love of God, but to put an end to all their grievances and complaints, and to give them a passage to eternal life and blessedness; so that to them death is not now in the hand of Satan, but in the hand of Christ—not Satan's servant, but Christ's servant—has not hell following it, but heaven to all who are in Christ.

5. Christ must be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to the justice and honour of God and to the support and comfort of his people. He must be faithful to God and merciful to men. (1.) In things pertaining to God, to his justice, and to his honour—to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, to make all the attributes of divine nature, and all the persons subsisting therein, harmonize in man's recovery, and fully to reconcile God and man. Observe, There was a great breach and quarrel between God and man, by reason of sin; but Christ, by becoming man and dying, has taken up the quarrel, and made reconciliation so far that God is ready to receive all into favour and friendship who come to him through Christ. (2.) In things pertaining to his people, to their support and comfort: *In that he suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour those that are tempted*, v. 18. Here observe, [1.] Christ's passion: *He suffered being tempted*; and his temptations were not the least part of his sufferings. *He was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin*, ch. 4:15. [2.] Christ's compassion: *He is able to succour those that are tempted*. He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, a sympathizing physician, tender and skilful; he knows how to deal with tempted sorrowful souls, because he has been himself sick of the same disease, not of sin, but of temptation and trouble of soul. The remembrance of his own sorrows and

temptations makes him mindful of the trials of his people, and ready to help them. Here observe, *First*, The best of Christians are subject to temptations, to many temptations, while in this world; let us never count upon an absolute freedom from temptations in this world. *Secondly*, Temptations bring our souls into such distress and danger that they need support and succour. *Thirdly*, Christ is ready and willing to succour those who under their temptations apply to him; and he became man, and was tempted, that he might be every way qualified to succour his people.

Chapter 3

In this chapter the apostle applies what he had said in the chapter foregoing concerning the priesthood of Christ, I. In a serious pathetic exhortation that this great high priest, who was discovered to them, might be seriously considered by them (v. 1-6). II. He then adds many weighty counsels and cautions (v. 7 to the end).

Verses 1-6

In these verses we have the application of the doctrine laid down in the close of the last chapter concerning the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. And observe,

I. In how fervent and affectionate a manner the apostle exhorts Christians to have this high priest much in their thoughts, and to make him the object of their close and serious consideration; and surely no one in earth or heaven deserves our consideration more than he. That this exhortation might be made the more effectual, observe,

1. The honourable compellation used towards those to whom he wrote: *Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling*. (1.) Brethren, not only my brethren, but the brethren of Christ, and in him brethren to all the saints. All the people of God are brethren, and should love and live like brethren. (2.) Holy brethren; holy not only in profession and title, but in principle and practice, in heart and life. This has been turned by some into scorn: "These," say they, "are the holy brethren;" but it is dangerous jesting with such edge-tools; *be not mockers, lest your bands be made strong*. Let those that are thus despised and scorned labour to be holy brethren indeed, and approve themselves so to God; and they need not be ashamed of the title nor dread the scoffs of the profane. The day is coming when those that make this a term of reproach would count it their greatest honour and happiness to be taken into this sacred brotherhood. (3.) *Partakers of the heavenly calling*—partakers of the means of grace, and of the Spirit of grace, that came from heaven, and by which Christians are effectually called out of darkness into marvelous light, that calling which brings down heaven into the souls of men, raises them up to a heavenly temper and conversation, and prepares them to live for ever with God in heaven.

2. The titles he gives to Christ, whom he would have them consider, (1.) As the apostle of our profession, the prime-minister of the gospel church, a messenger and a principal messenger sent of God to men, upon the most important errand, the great revealer of that faith which we profess to hold and of that hope which we profess to have. (2.) Not only the apostle, but the high priest too, of our profession, the chief officer of the Old Testament as well as the New, the head of the church in every state, and under each dispensation, upon whose satisfaction and intercession we profess to depend for pardon of sin, and acceptance with God. (3.) As Christ, the Messiah, anointed and every way qualified for the office both of apostle and high priest. (4.) As Jesus, our Saviour, our healer, the great physician of souls, typified by the brazen serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness, that those who were stung by the fiery serpents might look to him, and be saved.

II. We have the duty we owe to him who bears all these high and honourable titles, and that is to consider him as thus characterized. Consider what he is in himself, what he is to us, and what he will be to us hereafter and for ever; consider him, fix your thoughts upon him with the greatest attention, and act towards him accordingly; look unto Jesus, the author and

finisher of your faith. Here observe, 1. Many that profess faith in Christ have not a due consideration for him; he is not so much thought of as he deserves to be, and desires to be, by those that expect salvation from him. 2. Close and serious consideration of Christ would be of great advantage to us to increase our acquaintance with him, and to engage our love and our obedience to him, and reliance on him. 3. Even those that are holy brethren, and partakers of the heavenly calling, have need to stir up one another to think more of Christ than they do, to have him more in their minds; the best of his people think too seldom and too slightly of him. 4. We must consider Christ as he is described to us in the scriptures, and form our apprehensions of him thence, not from any vain conceptions and fancies of our own.

III. We have several arguments drawn up to enforce this duty of considering Christ the apostle and high priest of our profession.

1. The first is taken from his fidelity, v. 2. He was faithful to him that appointed him, as Moses was in all his house. (1.) Christ is an appointed Mediator; God the Father has sent and sealed him to that office, and therefore his mediation is acceptable to the Father. (2.) He is faithful to that appointment, punctually observing all the rules and orders of his mediation, and fully executing the trust reposed in him by his Father and by his people. (3.) That he is as faithful to him that appointed him as Moses was in all his house. Moses was faithful in the discharge of his office to the Jewish church in the Old Testament, and so is Christ under the New; this was a proper argument to urge upon the Jews, who had so high an opinion of the faithfulness of Moses, and yet his faithfulness was but typical of Christ's.

2. Another argument is taken from the superior glory and excellence of Christ above Moses (v. 3-6); therefore they were more obliged to consider Christ. (1.) Christ was a maker of the house, Moses but a member in it. By the house we are to understand the church of God, the people of God incorporated together under Christ their maker and head, and under subordinate officers, according to his law, observing his institutions. Christ is the maker of this house of the church in all ages: Moses was a minister in the house, he was instrumental under Christ in governing and edifying the house, but Christ is the maker of all things; for he is God, and no one less than God could build the church, either lay the foundation or carry on the superstructure. No less power was requisite to make the church than to make the world; the world was made out of nothing, the church made out of materials altogether unfit for such a building. Christ, who is God, drew the ground-plan of the church, provided the materials, and by almighty power disposed them to receive the form; he has compacted and united this his house, has settled the orders of it, and crowned all with his own presence, which is the true glory of this house of God. (2.) Christ was the master of this house, as well as the maker, v. 5,6. This house is styled his house, as the Son of God. Moses was only a faithful servant, for a testimony of those things that were afterwards to be revealed. Christ, as the eternal Son of God, is the rightful owner and sovereign ruler of the church. Moses was only a typical governor, for a testimony of all those things relating to the church which would be more clearly, completely, and comfortably revealed in the gospel by the Spirit of Christ; and therefore Christ is worthy of more glory than Moses, and of greater regard and consideration. This argument the apostle concludes, [1.] With a comfortable accommodation of it to himself and all true believers (v. 6). *Whose house we are*: each of us personally, as we are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and Christ dwells in us by faith; all of us jointly, as we are united by the bonds of graces, truths,

ordinances, gospel discipline, and devotions. [2.] With a characteristic description of those persons who constitute this house: "*If we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firmly to the end*; that is, if we maintain a bold and open profession of the truths of the gospel, upon which our hopes of grace and glory are built, and live upon and up to those hopes, so as to have a holy rejoicing in them, which shall abide firm to the end, notwithstanding all that we may meet with in so doing." So that you see there must not only be a setting out well in the ways of Christ, but a steadfastness and perseverance therein unto the end. We have here a direction what those must do who would partake of the dignity and privileges of the household of Christ. *First*, They must take the truths of the gospel into their heads and hearts. *Secondly*, They must build their hopes of happiness upon those truths. *Thirdly*, They must make an open profession of those truths. *Fourthly*, They must live so up to them as to keep their evidences clear, that they may rejoice in hope, and then they must in all persevere to the end. In a word, they must walk closely, consistently, courageously, and constantly, in the faith and practice of the gospel, that their Master, when he comes, may own and approve them.

Verses 7-19

Here the apostle proceeds in pressing upon them serious counsels and cautions to the close of the chapter; and he recites a passage out of Ps. 95:7, etc., where observe,

I. What he counsels them to do—to give a speedy and present attention to the call of Christ. "Hear his voice, assent to, approve of, and consider, what God in Christ speaks unto you; apply it to yourselves with suitable affections and endeavours, and set about it this very day, for to-morrow it may be too late."

II. What he cautions them against—hardening their hearts, turning the deaf ear to the calls and counsels of Christ: "When he tells you of the evil of sin, the excellency of holiness, the necessity of receiving him by faith as your Saviour, do not shut your ear and heart against such a voice as this." Observe, The hardening of our hearts is the spring of all our other sins.

III. Whose example he warns them by—that of the Israelites their fathers in the wilderness: *As in the provocation and day of temptation*; this refers to that remarkable passage at Massah Meribah, Ex. 17:2-7. Observe,

1. Days of temptation are often days of provocation.

2. To provoke God, when he is trying us, and letting us see that we entirely depend and live immediately upon him, is a provocation with a witness.

3. The sins of others, especially our relations, should be a warning to us. Our fathers' sins and punishments should be remembered by us, to deter us from following their evil examples. Now as to the sin of the fathers of the Jews, here reflected upon, observe,

(1.) The state in which these fathers were, when they thus sinned: they were in the wilderness, brought out of Egypt, but not got into Canaan, the thoughts whereof should have restrained them from sin.

(2.) The sin they were guilty of: they tempted and provoked God; they distrusted God, murmured against Moses, and would not attend to the voice of God.

(3.) The aggravations of their sin: they sinned in the wilderness, where they had a more immediate dependence upon God: they

sinned when God was trying them; they sinned when they saw his works—works of wonder wrought for their deliverance out of Egypt, and their support and supply in the wilderness from day to day. They continued thus to sin against God for forty years. These were heinous aggravations.

(4.) The source and spring of such aggravated sins, which were, [1.] They erred in their hearts; and these heart-errors produced many other errors in their lips and lives. [2.] They did not know God's ways, though he had walked before them. They did not know his ways; neither those ways of his providence in which he had walked towards them, nor those ways of his precept in which they ought to have walked towards God; they did not observe either his providences or his ordinances in a right manner.

(5.) The just and great resentment God had at their sins, and yet the great patience he exercised towards them (v. 10):

Wherefore I was grieved with that generation. Note, [1.] All sin, especially sin committed by God's professing privileged people, does not only anger and affront God, but it grieves him. [2.] God is loth to destroy his people in or for their sin, he waits long to be gracious to them. [3.] God keeps an exact account of the time that people go on in sinning against him, and in grieving him by their sins; but at length, if they by their sins continue to grieve the Spirit of God, their sins shall be made grievous to their own spirits, either in a way of judgment or mercy.

(6.) The irreversible doom passed upon them at last for their sins. God swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest, the rest either of an earthly or of a heavenly Canaan. Observe, [1.] Sin, long continued in, will kindle the divine wrath, and make it flame out against sinners. [2.] God's wrath will discover itself in its righteous resolution to destroy the impenitent; he will swear in his wrath, not rashly, but righteously, and his wrath will make their condition a restless condition; there is no resting under the wrath of God.

IV. What use the apostle makes of their awful example, v. 12, 13, etc. He gives the Hebrews a proper caution, and enforces it with an affectionate compellation.

1. He gives the Hebrews a proper caution; the word is, *Take heed, blepete—look to it.* "Look about you; be upon your guard against enemies both within and without; be circumspect. You see what kept many of your forefathers out of Canaan, and made their carcasses fall in the wilderness; take heed lest you fall into the same sin and snare and dreadful sentence. For you see Christ is head of the church, a much greater person than Moses, and your contempt of him must be a greater sin than their contempt of Moses; and so you are in danger of falling under a severer sentence than they." Observe, The ruin of others should be a warning to us to take heed of the rock they split upon. Israel's fall should for ever be a warning to all who come after them; for *all these things happened to them for ensamples* (1 Co. 10:11), and should be remembered by us. Take heed; all who would get safely to heaven must look about them.

2. He enforces the admonition with an affectionate compellation: "*Brethren, not only in the flesh, but in the Lord; brethren whom I love, and for whose welfare I labour and long.*" And here he enlarges upon the matter of the admonition: *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.* Here observe, (1.) A heart of unbelief is an evil heart. Unbelief is a great sin, it vitiates the heart of man. (2.) An evil heart of unbelief is at the bottom of all our sinful departures from God; it is a leading step to apostasy; if once we allow ourselves to distrust God, we may soon desert

him. (3.) Christian brethren have need to be cautioned against apostasy. *Let those that think they stand take heed lest they fall.*

3. He subjoins good counsel to the caution, and advises them to that which would be a remedy against this evil heart of unbelief—that they should *exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day*, v. 13. Observe, (1.) We should be doing all the good we can to one another while we are together, which will be but a short and uncertain time. (2.) Since to-morrow is none of ours, we must make the best improvement of to-day. (3.) If Christians do not exhort one another daily, they will be in danger of being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Note, [1.] There is a great deal of deceitfulness in sin; it appears fair, but is filthy; it appears pleasant, but is pernicious; it promises much, but performs nothing. [2.] The deceitfulness of sin is of a hardening nature to the soul; one sin allowed prepares for another; every act of sin confirms the habit; sinning against conscience is the way to sear the conscience; and therefore it should be the great concern of every one to exhort himself and others to beware of sin.

4. He comforts those who not only set out well, but hold on well, and hold out to the end (v. 14): *We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast to the end.* Here observe, (1.) The saints' privilege: they are made partakers of Christ, that is, of the Spirit, nature, graces, righteousness, and life of Christ; they are interested in all that is Christ's, in all that he is, in all that he has done, or can do. (2.) The condition on which they hold that privilege, namely, their perseverance in the bold and open profession and practice of Christ and Christianity unto the end. Not but they shall persevere, being kept by the mighty power of God through faith to salvation, but to be pressed thus to it is one means by which Christ helps his people to persevere. This tends to make them watchful and diligent, and so keeps them from apostasy. Here observe, [1.] The same spirit with which Christians set out in the ways of God they should maintain and evidence to the end. Those who begin seriously, and with lively affections and holy resolutions and humble reliance, should go on in the same spirit. But, [2.] There are a great many who in the beginning of their profession show a great deal of courage and confidence, but do not hold them fast to the end. [3.] Perseverance in faith is the best evidence of the sincerity of our faith.

5. The apostle resumes what he had quoted before from Ps. 95:7, etc., and he applies it closely to those of that generation, v. 15, 16, etc. While it is said, *To-day if you will hear*, etc.; as if he should say, "What was recited before from that scripture belonged not only to former ages, but to you now, and to all who shall come after you; that you take heed you fall not into the same sins, lest you fall under the same condemnation." The apostle tells them that though some who had heard the voice of God did provoke him, yet all did not so. Observe, (1.) Though the majority of hearers provoked God by unbelief, yet some there were who believed the report. (2.) Though the hearing of the word be the ordinary means of salvation, yet, if it be not hearkened to, it will expose men more to the anger of God. (3.) God will have a remnant that shall be obedient to his voice, and he will take care of such and make mention of them with honour. (4.) If these should fall in a common calamity, yet they shall partake of eternal salvation, while disobedient hearers perish for ever.

6. The apostle puts some queries upon what had been before mentioned, and gives proper answers to them (v. 17–19): *But with whom was he grieved forty years? With those that sinned. And to whom did he swear?* etc. Whence observe, (1.) God is grieved only with those of his people who sin against him, and continue in sin. (2.) God is grieved and provoked most by sins

publicly committed by the generality of a nation; when sin becomes epidemic, it is most provoking. (3.) Though God grieves long, and bears long, when pressed with the weight of general and prevailing wickedness, yet he will at length ease himself of public offenders by public judgments. (4.) Unbelief (with rebellion which is the consequent of it) is the great damning sin of the world, especially of those who have a revelation of the mind and will of God. This sin shuts up the heart of God, and shuts up the gate of heaven, against them; it lays them under the wrath and curse of God, and leaves them there; so that in truth and justice to himself he is obliged to cast them off for ever.

Chapter 4

The apostle, having in the foregoing chapter set forth the sin and punishment of the ancient Jews, proceeds in this, I. To declare that our privileges by Christ under the gospel exceed the privileges of the Jewish church under Moses, as a reason why we should make a right improvement of them (v. 1-4). II. He assigns the cause why the ancient Hebrews did not profit by their religious privileges (v. 2). Then, II. Confirms the privileges of those who believe, and the misery of those who continue in unbelief (v. 3-10). IV. Concludes with proper and powerful arguments and motives to faith and obedience.

Verses 1-10

Here, I. The apostle declares that our privileges by Christ under the gospel are not only as great, but greater than those enjoyed under the Mosaic law. He specifies this, that we have a promise left us of entering into his rest; that is, of entering into a covenant-relation to Christ, and a state of communion with God through Christ, and of growing up therein, till we are made perfect in glory. We have discoveries of this rest, and proposals, and the best directions how we may attain unto it. This promise of spiritual rest is a promise left us by the Lord Jesus Christ in his last will and testament, as a precious legacy. Our business is to see to it that we be the legatees, that we lay our claim to that rest and freedom from the dominion of sin, Satan, and the flesh, by which the souls of men are kept in servitude and deprived of the true rest of the soul, and may be also set free from the yoke of the law and all the toilsome ceremonies and services of it, and may enjoy peace with God in his ordinances and providences, and in our own consciences, and so have the prospect and earnest of perfect and everlasting rest in heaven.

II. He demonstrates the truth of his assertion, that we have as great advantages as they. For says he (v. 2), *To us was the gospel preached as well as unto them*; the same gospel for substance was preached under both Testaments, though not so clearly; not in so comfortable a manner under the Old as under the New. The best privileges the ancient Jews had were their gospel privileges; the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Testament were the gospel of that dispensation; and, whatever was excellent in it, was the respect it had to Christ. Now, if this was their highest privilege, we are not inferior to them; for we have the gospel as well as they, and in greater purity and perspicuity than they had.

III. He again assigns the reason why so few of the ancient Jews profited by that dispensation of the gospel which they enjoyed, and that was their want of faith: *The word preached did not profit them because it was not mixed with faith in those that heard him*, v. 2. Observe, 1. The word is preached to us that we may profit by it, that we may gain spiritual riches by it; it is a price put into our hands to get wisdom, the rich endowment of the soul. 2. There have been in all ages a great many unprofitable hearers; many who seem to deal much in sermons, in hearing the word of God, but gain nothing to their souls thereby; and those who are not gainers by hearing are great losers. 3. That which is at the bottom of all our unprofitableness under the word is our unbelief. We do not mix faith with what we hear; it is faith in the hearer that is the life of the word. Though the preacher believes the gospel, and endeavours to mix faith with his preaching, and to speak as one who has believed and so spoken, yet, if the hearers have not faith in their souls to mix with the word, they will be never the better for it. This faith must mingle with every word, and be in act and exercise while we are hearing; and, when we have heard the word, assenting to the truth of it,

approving of it, accepting the mercy offered, applying the word to ourselves with suitable affections, then we shall find great profit and gain by the word preached.

IV. On these considerations the apostle grounds his repeated and earnest caution and counsel that those who enjoy the gospel should maintain a holy fear and jealousy over themselves, lest latent unbelief should rob them of the benefit of the word, and of that spiritual rest which is discovered and tendered in the gospel: *Let us fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it*, v. 1. Observe, 1. Grace and glory are attainable by all under the gospel: there is an offer, and a promise to those who shall accept the offer. 2. Those who may attain them may also fall short. Those who may attain them may also fall short. Those who might have attained salvation by faith may fall short by unbelief. 3. It is a dreadful thing so much as to seem to fall short of the gospel salvation, to seem so to themselves, to lose their comfortable hope; and to seem so to others, so losing the honour of their holy profession. But, if it be so dreadful to seem to fall short of this rest, it is much more dreadful really to fall short. Such a disappointment must be fatal. 4. One good means to prevent either our real falling short or seeming to fall short is to maintain a holy and religious fear lest we should fall short. This will make us vigilant and diligent, sincere and serious; this fear will put us upon examining our faith and exercising it; whereas presumption is the high road to ruin.

V. The apostle confirms the happiness of all those who truly believe the gospel; and this he does,

1. By asserting so positively the truth of it, from the experience of himself and others: *"We, who have believed, do enter into rest*, v. 3. We enter into a blessed union with Christ, and into a communion with God through Christ; in this state we actually enjoy many sweet communications of pardon of sin, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace and earnestness of glory, resting from the servitude of sin, and reposing ourselves in God till we are prepared to rest with him in heaven."

2. He illustrates and confirms it that those who believe are thus happy, and do enter into rest. (1.) From God's finishing his work of creation, and so entering into his rest (v. 3, 4), appointing our first parents to rest the seventh day, to rest in God. Now as God finished his work, and then rested from it, and acquiesced in it, so he will cause those who believe to finish their work, and then to enjoy their rest. (2.) From God's continuing the observance of the sabbath, after the fall, and the revelation of a Redeemer. They were to keep the seventh day a holy sabbath to the Lord, therein praising him who had raised them up out of nothing by creating power, and praying to him that he would create them anew by his Spirit of grace, and direct their faith to the promised Redeemer and restorer of all things, by which faith they find rest in their souls. (3.) From God's proposing Canaan as a typical rest for the Jews who believed: and as those who did believe, Caleb and Joshua, did actually enter into Canaan; so those who now believe shall enter into rest. (4.) From the certainty of another rest besides that seventh day of rest instituted and observed both before and after the fall, and besides that typical Canaan-rest which most of the Jews fell short of by unbelief; for the Psalmist has spoken of another day and another rest, whence it is evident that there is a more spiritual and excellent sabbath remaining for the people of God than that into which Joshua led the Jews (v. 6-9), and this rest remaining, [1.] A rest of grace, and comfort, and holiness, in the gospel state. This is the rest wherewith the Lord Jesus, our Joshua, causes weary souls and awakened consciences to rest, and this is the refreshing. [2.] A rest in glory, the everlasting sabbatism of

heaven, which is the repose and perfection of nature and grace too, where the people of God shall enjoy the end of their faith and the object of all their desires. (5.) This is further proved from the glorious forerunners who have actually taken possession of this rest—God and Christ. It is certain that God, after the creating of the world in six days, entered into his rest; and it is certain that Christ, when he had finished the work of our redemption, entered into his rest; and these were not only examples, but earnest, that believers shall enter into their rest: *He that hath entered into rest hath also ceased from his own works as God did from his*, v. 10. Every true believer hath ceased from his own works of righteousness, and from the burdensome works of the law, as God and Christ have ceased from their works of creation and redemption.

VI. The apostle confirms the misery of those who do not believe; they shall never enter into this spiritual rest, either of grace here or glory hereafter. This is as certain as the word and oath of God can make it. As sure as God has entered into his rest, so sure it is that obstinate unbelievers shall be excluded. As sure as the unbelieving Jews fell in the wilderness, and never reached the promised land, so sure it is that unbelievers shall fall into destruction, and never reach heaven. As sure as Joshua, the great captain of the Jews, could not give them possession of Canaan because of their unbelief, notwithstanding his eminent valour and conduct, so sure it is that even Jesus himself, and captain of our salvation, notwithstanding all that fulness of grace and strength that dwells in him, will not, cannot, give to final unbelievers either spiritual or eternal rest: it remains only for the people of God; others by their sin abandon themselves to eternal restlessness.

Verses 11-16

In this latter part of the chapter the apostle concludes, first, with a serious repeated exhortation, and then with proper and powerful motives.

I. Here we have a serious exhortation: *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest*, v. 11. Observe, 1. The end proposed—rest spiritual and eternal, the rest of grace here and glory hereafter—in Christ on earth, with Christ in heaven. 2. The way to this end prescribed—labour, diligent labour; this is the only way to rest; those who will not work now shall not rest hereafter. After due and diligent labour, sweet and satisfying rest shall follow; and labour now will make that rest more pleasant when it comes. *The sleep of the labouring man is sweet*, Eccl. 5:12. Let us therefore labour, let us all agree and be unanimous in this, and let us quicken one another, and call upon one another to this diligence. It is the truest act of friendship, when we see our fellow-christians loiter, to call upon them to mind their business and labour at it in earnest. "Come, Sirs, let us all go to work; why do we sit still? Why do we loiter? Come, let us labour; now is our working time, our rest remains." Thus should Christians call upon themselves and one another to be diligent in duty; and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

II. Here we have proper and powerful motives to make the advice effectual, which are drawn,

1. From the dreadful example of those who have already perished by unbelief: *Lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief*. To have seen so many fall before us will be a great aggravation of our sin, if we will not take warning by them: their ruin calls loudly upon us; their lost and restless souls cry to us from their torments, that we do not, by sinning as they did, make ourselves miserable as they are.

2. From the great help and advantage we may have from the word of God to strengthen our faith, and excite our diligence, that

we may obtain this rest: *The word of God is quick and powerful*, v. 12. By the word of God we may understand either the essential or the written word: the essential *Word*, that in *the beginning was with God, and was God* (Jn. 1:1), the Lord Jesus Christ, and indeed what is said in this verse is true concerning him; but most understand it of the written word, the holy scriptures, which are the word of God. Now of this word it is said, (1.) That is *quick*; it is very lively and active, in all its efforts, in seizing the conscience of the sinner, in cutting him to the heart, and in comforting him and binding up the wounds of the soul. Those know not the word of God who call it a dead letter; it is quick, compared to the light, and nothing quicker than the light; it is not only quick, but quickening; it is a vital light; it is a living word, *ζωμν*. Saints die, and sinners die; but the word of God lives. *All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever*, 1 Pt. 1:24, 25. *Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words, which I commanded the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers?* Zec. 1:5, 6. (2.) It is *powerful*. When God sets it home by his Spirit, it convinces powerfully, converts powerfully, and comforts powerfully. It is so powerful as to pull down strong holds (2 Co. 10:4, 5), to raise the dead, to make the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. It is powerful to batter down Satan's kingdom, and to set up the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins thereof. (3.) It is *sharper than any two-edged sword*; it cuts both ways; it is *the sword of the Spirit*, Eph. 6:17. It is the two-edged sword that cometh out of the mouth of Christ, Rev. 1:16. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, for it will enter where no other sword can, and make a more critical dissection: it *pierces to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit*, the soul and its habitual prevailing temper; it makes a soul that has been a long time of a proud spirit to be humble, of a perverse spirit to be meek and obedient. Those sinful habits that have become as it were natural to the soul, and rooted deeply in it, and become in a manner one with it, are separated and cut off by this sword. It cuts off ignorance from the understanding, rebellion from the will, and enmity from the mind, which, when carnal, is enmity itself against God. This sword divides between *the joints and the marrow*, the most secret, close, and intimate parts of the body; this sword can cut off the lusts of the flesh as well as the lusts of the mind, and make men willing to undergo the sharpest operation for the mortifying of sin. (4.) It is *a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*, even the most secret and remote thoughts and designs. It will discover to men the variety of their thoughts and purposes, the vileness of them, the bad principles they are actuated by, the sinister and sinful ends they act to. The word will turn the inside of a sinner out, and let him see all that is in his heart. Now such a word as this must needs be a great help to our faith and obedience.

3. From the perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ, both of his person and office.

(1.) His person, particularly his omniscience: *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight*, v. 13. This is agreeable to what Christ speaks of himself: *All the churches shall know that I am he that searches the reins and hearts*, Rev. 2:23. None of the creatures can be concealed from Christ; none of the creatures of God, for Christ is the Creator of them all; and there are none of the motions and workings of our heads and hearts (which may be called creatures of our own) but what are open and manifest to him with whom we have to do as the object of our worship, and the high priest of our profession. He, by his omniscience, cuts up the sacrifice we bring to him, that it may be presented to the Father. Now as the high priest

inspected the sacrificed beasts, cut them up to the back-bone to see whether they were sound at heart, so all things are thus dissected, and lie open to the piercing eye of our great high priest. An he who now tries our sacrifices will at length, as Judge, try our state. We shall have to do with him as one who will determine our everlasting state. Some read the words, *to whom with us there is an account or reckoning*. Christ has an exact account of us all. He has accounted for all who believe on him; and he will account with all: our accounts are before him. This omniscience of Christ, and the account we owe of ourselves to him, should engage us to persevere in faith and obedience till he has perfected all our affairs.

(2.) We have an account of the excellency and perfection of Christ, as to his office, and this particular office of our high priest. The apostle first instructs Christians in the knowledge of their high priest, what kind of high priest he is, and then puts them in mind of the duty they owe on this account.

[1.] What kind of high priest Christ is (v. 14): *Seeing we have such a high priest; that is, First, A great high priest, much greater than Aaron, or any of the priests of his order. The high priests under the law were accounted great and venerable person; but they were but faint types and shadows of Christ. The greatness of our high priest is set forth, 1. By his having passed into the heavens. The high priest under the law, once a year, went out of the people's sight within the veil, into the holiest of all, where were the sacred signals of the presence of God; but Christ once for all has passed into the heavens, to take the government of all upon him, to send the Spirit to prepare a place for his people, and to make intercession for them. Christ executed one part of his priesthood on earth, in dying for us; the other he executes in heaven, by pleading the cause, and presenting the offerings, of his people. 2. The greatness of Christ is set forth by his name, Jesus—a physician and a Saviour, and one of a divine nature, the Son of God by eternal generation; and therefore having divine perfection, able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him. Secondly, He is not only a great, but a gracious high priest, merciful, compassionate, and sympathizing with his people: We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, v. 15. Though he is so great, and so far above us, yet he is very kind, and tenderly concerned for us. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities in such a manner as none else can be; for he was himself tried with all the afflictions and troubles that are incident to our nature in its fallen state: and this not only that he might be able to satisfy for us, but to sympathize with us. But then, Thirdly, He is a sinless high priest: He was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin. He was tempted by Satan, but he came off without sin. We seldom meet with temptations but they give us some shock. We are apt to give back, though we do not yield; but our great high priest came off clear in his encounter with the devil, who could neither find any sin in him nor fix any stain upon him. He was tried severely by the Father. It pleased the Lord to bruise him; and yet he sinned not, either in thought, word, or deed. He had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled; and such a high priest became us. Having thus told us what a one our high priest is, the apostle proceeds to show us, [2.] How we should demean ourselves towards him. First, Let us hold fast our profession of faith in him, v. 14. Let us never deny him, never be ashamed of him before men. Let us hold fast the enlightening doctrines of Christianity in our heads, the enlivening principles of it in our hearts, the open profession of it in our lips, and our practical and universal subjection to it in our lives. Observe here, 1. We ought to be possessed of the doctrines, principles, and practice, of the Christian life. 2. When we*

are so, we may be in danger of losing our hold, from the corruption of our hearts, the temptations of Satan, and the allurements of this evil world. 3. The excellency of the high priest of our profession would make our apostasy from him most heinous and inexcusable; it would be the greatest folly and the basest ingratitude. 4. Christians must not only set our well, but they must hold out: those who endure to the end will be saved, and none but they. *Secondly*, We should encourage ourselves, by the excellency of our high priest, to come boldly to the throne of grace, v. 16. Here observe, 1. There is a throne of grace set up, a way of worship instituted, in which God may with honour meet poor sinners, and treat with them, and they may with hope draw nigh to him, repenting and believing. God might have set up a tribunal of strict and inexorable justice, dispensing death, the wages of sin, to all who were convened before it; but he has chosen to set up a throne of grace. A throne speaks authority, and bespeaks awe and reverence. A throne of grace speaks great encouragement even to the chief of sinners. There grace reigns, and acts with sovereign freedom, power, and bounty. 2. It is our duty and interest to be often found before this throne of grace, waiting on the Lord in all the duties of his worship, private and public. It is good for us to be there. 3. Our business and errand at the throne of grace should be that we *may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*. Mercy and grace are the things we want, mercy to pardon all our sins and grace to purify our souls. 4. Besides the daily dependence we have upon God for present supplies, there are some seasons in which we shall most sensibly need the mercy and grace of God, and we should lay up prayers against such seasons—times of temptation, either by adversity or prosperity, and especially a dying time: we should every day put up a petition for mercy in our last day. The Lord grant unto us that we may find mercy of the Lord at that day, 2 Tim. 1:18. 5. In all our approaches to this throne of grace for mercy, we should come with a humble freedom and boldness, with a liberty of spirit and a liberty of speech; we should ask in faith, nothing doubting; we should come with a Spirit of adoption, as children to a reconciled God and Father. We are indeed to come with reverence and godly fear, but not with terror and amazement; not as if we were dragged before the tribunal of justice, but kindly invited to the mercy-seat, where grace reigns, and loves to exert and exalt itself towards us. 6. The office of Christ, as being our high priest, and such a high priest, should be the ground of our confidence in all our approaches to the throne of grace. Had we not a Mediator, we could have no boldness in coming to God; for we are guilty and polluted creatures. All we do is polluted; we cannot go into the presence of God alone; we must either go in the hand of a Mediator or our hearts and our hopes will fail us. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. He is our Advocate, and, while he pleads for his people, he pleads with the price in his hand, by which he purchased all that our souls want or can desire.

Chapter 5

In this chapter the apostle continues his discourse upon the priesthood of Christ, a sweet subject, which he would not too soon dismiss. And here, I. He explains the nature of the priestly office in general (v. 1-3). II. The proper and regular call there must be to this office (v. 4-6). III. The requisite qualifications for the work (v. 7-9). IV. The peculiar order of the priesthood of Christ; it was not after the order of Aaron, but of Melchisedec (v. 6, 7, 10). V. He reproves the Hebrews, that they had not made those improvements in knowledge which might have made them capable of looking into the more abstruse and mysterious parts of scripture (v. 11-14).

Verses 1-9

We have here an account of the nature of the priestly office in general, though with an accommodation to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are told,

I. Of what kind of beings the high priest must be. He must be taken from among men; he must be a man, one of ourselves, bone of our bones, flesh of our flesh, and spirit of our spirits, a partaker of our nature, and a standard-bearer among ten thousand. This implies, 1. That man had sinned. 2. That God would not admit sinful man to come to him immediately and alone, without a high priest, who must be taken from among men. 3. That God was pleased to take one from among men, by whom they might approach God in hope, and he might receive them with honour. 4. That every one shall now be welcome to God that comes to him by this his priest.

II. For whom every high priest is ordained: *For men in things pertaining to God*, for the glory of God and the good of men, that he might come between God and man. So Christ did; and therefore let us never attempt to go to God but through Christ, nor expect any favour from God but through Christ.

III. For what purpose every high priest was ordained: *That he might offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin*.

1. That he might offer gifts or free-will offerings, brought to the high priest, so offered for the glory of God, and as an acknowledgment that our all is of him and from him; we have nothing but what he is pleased to give us, and of his own we offer to him an oblation of acknowledgment. This intimates, (1.) That all we bring to God must be free and not forced; it must be a gift; it must be given and not taken away again. (2.) That all we bring to God must go through the high priest's hands, as the great agent between God and man.

2. That he might offer sacrifices for sin; that is, the offerings that were appointed to make atonement, that sin might be pardoned and sinners accepted. Thus Christ is constituted a high priest for both these ends. Our good deeds must be presented by Christ, to render ourselves and them acceptable; and our evil deeds must be expiated by the sacrifice of himself, that they may not condemn and destroy us. And now, as we value acceptance with God and pardon, we must apply ourselves by faith to this our great high priest.

IV. How this high priest must be qualified, v. 2.

1. He must be one that can have compassion on two sorts of persons:—(1.) *On the ignorant*, or those that are guilty of sins of

ignorance. He must be one who can find in his heart to pity them, and intercede with God for them, one that is willing to instruct those that are dull of understanding. (2.) *On those that are out of the way*, out of the way of truth, duty, and happiness; and he must be one who has tenderness enough to lead them back from the by-paths of error, sin, and misery, into the right way: this will require great patience and compassion, even the compassion of a God.

2. He must also be compassed with infirmity; and so be able from himself feelingly to consider our frame, and to sympathize with us. Thus Christ was qualified. He took upon him our sinless infirmities; and this gives us great encouragement to apply ourselves to him under every affliction; for in all the afflictions of his people he is afflicted.

V. How the high priest was to be called of God. He must have both an internal and external call to his office: *For no man taketh this honour to himself* (v. 4), that is, no man ought to do it, no man can do it legally; if any does it, he must be reckoned a usurper, and treated accordingly. Here observe, 1. The office of the priesthood was a very great honour. To be employed to stand between God and man, one while representing God and his will to men, at another time representing man and his case to God, and dealing between them about matters of the highest importance—entrusted on both sides with the honour of God and the happiness of man—must render the office very honourable. 2. The priesthood is an office and honour that no man ought to take to himself; if he does, he can expect no success in it, nor any reward for it, only from himself. He is an intruder who is not called of God, as was Aaron. Observe, (1.) God is the fountain of all honour, especially true spiritual honour. He is the fountain of true authority, whether he calls any to the priesthood in an extraordinary way, as he did Aaron, or in an ordinary way, as he called his successors. (2.) Those only can expect assistance from God, and acceptance with him, and his presence and blessing on them and their administrations, that are called of God; others may expect a blast instead of a blessing.

VI. How this is brought home and applied to Christ: *So Christ glorified not himself*, v. 5. Observe here, Though Christ reckoned it his glory to be made a high priest, yet he would not assume that glory to himself. He could truly say, *I seek not my own glory*, Jn. 8:50. Considered as God, he was not capable of any additional glory, but as man and Mediator he did not run without being sent; and, if he did not, surely others should be afraid to do it.

VII. The apostle prefers Christ before Aaron, both in the manner of his call and in the holiness of his person. 1. In the manner of his call, in which God said unto him, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee* (quoted from Ps. 2:7), referring to his eternal generation as God, his wonderful conception as man, and his perfect qualification as Mediator. Thus God solemnly declared his dear affection to Christ, his authoritative appointment of him to the office of a Mediator, his installment and approbation of him in that office, his acceptance of him, and of all he had done or should do in the discharge of it. Now God never said thus to Aaron. Another expression that God used in the call of Christ we have in Ps. 110:4, *Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec*, v. 6. God the Father appointed him a priest of a higher order than that of Aaron. The priesthood of Aaron was to be but temporary; the priesthood of Christ was to be perpetual: the priesthood of Aaron was to be successive, descending from the fathers to the children; the priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchisedec, was to be personal, and the high priest immortal as to his office, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, as it is more largely described in the seventh chapter, and will be opened there. 2. Christ is here preferred to Aaron in the holiness of

his person. Other priests were to offer up sacrifices, as for the *sins of others, so for themselves*, v. 3. But Christ needed not to offer for sins for himself, *for he had done no violence*, neither was there *any deceit in his mouth*, Isa. 53:9. And such a high priest became us.

VIII. We have an account of Christ's discharge of this his office, and of the consequences of that discharge, v. 7-9.

1. The discharge of his office of the priesthood (v. 7): *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications*, etc. Here observe, (1.) He took to him flesh, and for some days tabernacled therein; he became a mortal man, and reckoned his life by days, herein setting us an example how we should reckon ours. Were we to reckon our lives by days, it would be a means to quicken us to do the work of every day in its day. (2.) Christ, in the days of his flesh, subjected himself to death; he hungered, he was a tempted, bleeding, dying Jesus! His body is now in heaven, but it is a spiritual glorious body. (3.) God the Father was able to save him from death. He could have prevented his dying, but he would not; for then the great design of his wisdom and grace must have been defeated. What would have become of us if God had saved Christ from dying? The Jews reproachfully said, *Let him deliver him now, if he will have him*, Mt. 27:43. But it was in kindness to us that the Father would not suffer that bitter cup to pass away from him; for then we must have drunk the dregs of it, and been miserable for ever. (4.) Christ, in the days of his flesh, offered up prayers and supplications to his Father, as an earnest of his intercession in heaven. A great many instances we have of Christ's praying. This refers to his prayer in his agony (Mt. 26:39, and ch. 27:46), and to that before his agony (Jn. 17) which he put up for his disciples, and all who should believe on his name. (5.) The prayers and supplications that Christ offered up were joined with strong cries and tears, herein setting us an example not only to pray, but to be fervent and importunate in prayer. How many dry prayers, how few wet ones, do we offer up to God! (6.) Christ was heard in that he feared. How? Why he was answered by present supports in and under his agonies, and in being carried well through death, and delivered from it by a glorious resurrection: *He was heard in that he feared*. He had an awful sense of the wrath of God, of the weight of sin. His human nature was ready to sink under the heavy load, and would have sunk, had he been quite forsaken in point of help and comfort from God; but he was heard in this, he was supported under the agonies of death. He was carried through death; and there is no real deliverance from death but to be carried well through it. We may have many recoveries from sickness, but we are never saved from death till we are carried well through it. And those that are thus saved from death will be fully delivered at last by a glorious resurrection, of which the resurrection of Christ was the earnest and first-fruits.

2. The consequences of this discharge of his office, v. 8, 9, etc.

(1.) By these his sufferings *he learned obedience, though he was a Son*, v. 8. Here observe, [1.] The privilege of Christ: *He was a Son*; the only-begotten of the Father. One would have thought this might have exempted him from suffering, but it did not. Let none then who are the children of God by adoption expect an absolute freedom from suffering. *What Son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?* [2.] Christ made improvement by his sufferings. By his passive obedience, he learned active obedience; that is, he practiced that great lesson, and made it appear that he was well and perfectly learned in it; though he never was disobedient, yet he never performed such an act of obedience as when he became obedient to death, even to the death of the

cross. Here he has left us an example, that we should learn by all our afflictions a humble obedience to the will of God. We need affliction, to teach us submission.

(2.) By these his sufferings he was made perfect, and became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him, v. 9. [1.] Christ by his sufferings was consecrated to his office, consecrated by his own blood. [2.] By his sufferings he consummated that part of his office which was to be performed on earth, making reconciliation for iniquity; and in this sense he is said to be *made perfect*, a perfect propitiation. [3.] Hereby he has become the author of eternal salvation to men; he has by his sufferings purchased a full deliverance from sin and misery, and a full fruition of holiness and happiness for his people. Of this salvation he has given notice in the gospel; he has made a tender of it in the new covenant, and has sent the Spirit to enable men to accept this salvation. [4.] This salvation is actually bestowed on none but those who obey Christ. It is not sufficient that we have some doctrinal knowledge of Christ, or that we make a profession of faith in him, but we must hearken to his word, and obey him. He is exalted to be a prince to rule us, as well as a Saviour to deliver us; and he will be a Saviour to none but to those whom he is a prince, and who are willing that he should reign over them; the rest he will account his enemies, and treat them accordingly. But to those who obey him, devoting themselves to him, denying themselves, and taking up their cross, and following him, he will be the author, *aitios*—the grand cause of their salvation, and they shall own him as such for ever.

Verses 10-14

Here the apostle returns to what he had in v. 6 cited out of Ps. 110, concerning the peculiar order of the priesthood of Christ, that is, the order of Melchisedec. And here,

I. He declares he had many things which he could say to them concerning this mysterious person called Melchisedec, whose priesthood was eternal, and therefore the salvation procured thereby should be eternal also. We have a more particular account of this Melchisedec in ch. 7. Some think the things which the apostle means, that were hard to be uttered, were not so much concerning Melchisedec himself as concerning Christ, of whom Melchisedec was the type. And doubtless this apostle had many things to say concerning Christ that were very mysterious, hard to be uttered; there are great mysteries in the person and offices of the Redeemer; Christianity is the great mystery of godliness.

II. He assigns the reason why he did not say all those things concerning Christ, our Melchisedec, that he had to say, and what it was that made it so difficult for him to utter them, namely, the dulness of the Hebrews to whom he wrote: *You are dull of hearing*. There is a difficulty in the things themselves, and there may be a weakness in the ministers of the gospel to speak clearly about these things; but generally the fault is in the hearers. Dull hearers make the preaching of the gospel a difficult thing, and even many who have some faith are but dull hearers, dull of understanding and slow to believe; the understanding is weak, and does not apprehend these spiritual things; the memory is weak, and does not retain them.

III. He insists upon the faultiness of this infirmity of theirs. It was not a mere natural infirmity, but it was a sinful infirmity, and more in them than others, by reason of the singular advantages they had enjoyed for improving in the knowledge of Christ: *For when, for the time, you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which are the first principles of the oracles of God*, v. 12. Here observe,

1. What proficiency might have been reasonably expected from these Hebrews—that they might have been so well instructed in the doctrine of the gospel as to have been teachers of others. Hence learn, (1.) God takes notice of the time and helps we have for gaining scripture-knowledge. (2.) From those to whom much is given much is expected. (3.) Those who have a good understanding in the gospel should be teachers of other, if not in a public, yet in a private station. (4.) None should take upon them to be teachers of others, but those who have made a good improvement in spiritual knowledge themselves.

2. Observe the sad disappointment of those just expectations: *You have need that one should teach you again*, etc. Here note, (1.) In the oracles of God there are some first principles, plain to be understood and necessary to be learned. (2.) There are also deep and sublime mysteries, which those should search into who have learned the first principles, that so they may stand complete in the whole will of God. (3.) Some persons, instead of going forward in Christian knowledge, forget the very first principles that they had learned long ago; and indeed those that are not improving under the means of grace will be losing. (4.) It is a sin and shame for persons that are men for their age and standing in the church to be children and babes in understanding.

IV. The apostle shows how the various doctrines of the gospel must be dispensed to different persons. There are in the church babes and persons of full age (v. 12–14), and there are in the gospel milk and strong meat. Observe, 1. Those that are babes, unskillful in the word of righteousness, must be fed with milk; they must be entertained with the plainest truths, and these delivered in the plainest manner; *there must be line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little*, Isa. 28:10. Christ despises not his babes; he has provided suitable food for them. It is good to be babes in Christ, but not always to continue in that childish state; we should endeavor to pass the infant state; we should always remain in malice children, but in understanding we should grow up to a manly maturity. 2. There is strong meat for those that are of full age, v. 14. The deeper mysteries of religion belong to those that are of a higher class in the school of Christ, who have learned the first principles and well improved them; so that by reason of use they have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil, duty and sin, truth and error. Observe, (1.) There have been always in the Christian state children, young men, and fathers. (2.) Every true Christian, having received a principle of spiritual life from God, stands in need of nourishment to preserve that life. (3.) The word of God is food and nourishment to the life of grace: *As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby*. (4.) It is the wisdom of ministers rightly to divide the word of truth, and to give to every one his portion—milk to babes, and strong meat to those of full age. (5.) There are spiritual senses as well as those that are natural. There is a spiritual eye, a spiritual appetite, a spiritual taste; the soul has its sensations as well as the body; these are much depraved and lost by sin, but they are recovered by grace. (6.) It is by use and exercise that these senses are improved, made more quick and strong to taste the sweetness of what is good and true, and the bitterness of what is false and evil. Not only reason and faith, but spiritual sense, will teach men to distinguish between what is pleasing and what is provoking to God, between what is helpful and what is hurtful to our own souls.

Chapter 6

In this chapter the apostle proceeds to persuade the Hebrews to make a better proficiency in religion than they had done, as the best way to prevent apostasy, the dreadful nature and consequences of which sin he sets forth in a serious manner (v. 1-8), and then expresses his good hopes concerning them, that they would persevere in faith and holiness, to which he exhorts them, and sets before them the great encouragement they had from God, both with respect to their duty and happiness (v. 9 to the end).

Verses 1-8

We have here the apostle's advice to the Hebrews—that they would grow up from a state of childhood to the fullness of the stature of the new man in Christ. He declares his readiness to assist them all he could in their spiritual progress; and, for their greater encouragement, he puts himself with them: *Let us go on*. Here observe, In order to their growth, Christians must leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ. How must they leave them? They must not lose them, they must not despise them, they must not forget them. They must lay them up in their hearts, and lay them as the foundation of all their profession and expectation; but they must not rest and stay in them, they must not be always laying the foundation, they must go on, and build upon it. There must be a superstructure; for the foundation is laid on purpose to support the building. Here it may be enquired, Why did the apostle resolve to set strong meat before the Hebrews, when he knew they were but babes? *Answer*. 1. Though some of them were but weak, yet others of them had gained more strength; and they must be provided for suitably. And, as those who are grown Christians must be willing to hear the plainest truths preached for the sake of the weak, so the weak must be willing to hear the more difficult and mysterious truths preached for the sake of those who are strong. 2. He hoped they would be growing in their spiritual strength and stature, and so be able to digest stronger meat.

I. The apostle mentions several foundation-principles, which must be well laid at first, and then built upon; neither his time nor theirs must be spent in laying these foundations over and over again. These foundations are six:—

1. Repentance from dead works, that is, conversion and regeneration, repentance from a spiritually dead state and course; as if he had said, "Beware of destroying the life of grace in your souls; your minds were changed by conversion, and so were your lives. Take care that you return not to sin again, for then you must have the foundation to lay again; there must be a second conversion a repenting not only of, but from, dead works." Observe here, (1.) The sins of persons unconverted are dead works; they proceed from persons spiritually dead, and they tend to death eternal. (2.) Repentance for dead works, if it be right, is repentance from dead works, a universal change of heart and life. (3.) Repentance for and from dead works is a foundation-principle, which must not be laid again, though we must renew our repentance daily.

2. Faith towards God, a firm belief of the existence of God, of his nature, attributes, and perfections, the trinity of persons in the unity of essence, the whole mind and will of God as revealed in his word, particularly what relates to the Lord Jesus Christ. We must by faith acquaint ourselves with these things; we must assent to them, we must approve of them, and apply all to ourselves with suitable affections and actions. Observe, (1.) Repentance from dead works, and faith towards God, are connected, and always go together; they are inseparable twins, the one cannot live without the other. (2.) Both of these are

foundation-principles, which should be once well laid, but never pulled up, so as to need to be laid over again; we must not relapse into infidelity.

3. The doctrine of baptisms, that is, of being baptized by a minister of Christ with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as the initiating sign or seal of the covenant of grace, strongly engaging the person so baptized to get acquainted with the new covenant, to adhere to it, and prepare to renew it at the table of the Lord and sincerely to regulate himself according to it, relying upon the truth and faithfulness of God for the blessings contained in it. And the doctrine of an inward baptism, that of the Spirit sprinkling the blood of Christ upon the soul, for justification, and the graces of the Spirit for sanctification. This ordinance of baptism is a foundation to be rightly laid, and daily remembered, but not repeated.

4. Laying on of hands, on persons passing solemnly from their initiated state by baptism to the confirmed state, by returning the answer of a good conscience towards God, and sitting down at the Lord's table. This passing from incomplete to complete church membership was performed by laying on of hands, which was extraordinary conveyance of the gift of the Holy Ghost continued. This, once done, all are obliged to abide by, and not to need another solemn admission, as at first, but to go on, and grow up, in Christ. Or by this may be meant ordination of persons to the ministerial office, who are duly qualified for it and inclined to it; and this by fasting and prayer, with laying on of the hands of the presbytery: and this is to be done but once.

5. The resurrection of the dead, that is, of dead bodies; and their re-union with their souls, to be eternal companions together in weal or woe, according as their state was towards God when they died, and the course of life they led in this world.

6. Eternal judgment, determining the soul of every one, when it leaves the body at death, and both soul and body at the last day, to their eternal state, every one to his proper society and employment to which they were entitled and fitted here on earth; the wicked to everlasting punishment, the righteous to life eternal.

These are the great foundation-principles which ministers should clearly and convincingly unfold, and closely apply. In these the people should be well instructed and established, and from these they must never depart; without these, the other parts of religion have no foundation to support them.

II. The apostle declares his readiness and resolution to assist the Hebrews in building themselves up on these foundations till they arrive at perfection: *And this we will do, if God permit*, v. 3. And thereby he teaches them, 1. That right resolution is very necessary in order to progress and proficiency in religion. 2. That that resolution is right which is not only made in the sincerity of our hearts, but in a humble dependence upon God for strength, for assistance and righteousness, for acceptance, and for time and opportunity. 3. That ministers should not only teach people what to do, but go before them, and along with them, in the way of duty.

III. He shows that this spiritual growth is the surest way to prevent that dreadful sin of apostasy from the faith. And here,

1. He shows how far persons may go in religion, and, after all, fall away, and perish for ever, v. 4, 5. (1.) They may be *enlightened*. Some of the ancients understand this of their being baptized; but it is rather to be understood of notional knowledge and common illumination, of which persons may have a great deal, and yet come short of heaven. *Balaam was the man whose eyes were opened* (Num. 24:3), and yet with his eyes opened he went down to utter darkness. (2.) They may *taste*

of the heavenly gift, feel something of the efficacy of the Holy Spirit in his operations upon their souls, causing them to taste something of religion, and yet be like persons in the market, who taste of what they will not come up to the price of, and so but take a taste, and leave it. Persons may taste religion, and seem to like it, if they could have it upon easier terms than denying themselves, and taking up their cross, and following Christ. (3.) They may be *made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, that is, of his extraordinary and miraculous gifts; they may have cast out devils in the name of Christ, and done many other mighty works. Such gifts in the apostolic age were sometimes bestowed upon those who had no true saving grace. (4.) They may *taste of the good word of God*; they may have some relish of gospel doctrines, may hear the word with pleasure, may remember much of it, and talk well of it, and yet never be cast into the form and mould of it, nor have it dwelling richly in them. (5.) They may have *tasted of the powers of the world to come*; they may have been under strong impressions concerning heaven, and dread of going to hell. These lengths hypocrites may go, and, after all, turn apostates. Now hence observe, [1.] These great things are spoken here of those who may fall away; yet it is not here said of them that they were truly converted, or that they were justified; there is more in true saving grace than in all that is here said of apostates. [2.] This therefore is no proof of the final apostasy of true saints. These indeed may fall frequently and foully, but yet they will not totally nor finally from God; the purpose and the power of God, the purchase and the prayer of Christ, the promise of the gospel, the everlasting covenant that God has made with them, ordered in all things and sure, the indwelling of the Spirit, and the immortal seed of the word, these are their security. But the tree that has not these roots will not stand.

2. The apostle describes the dreadful case of such as fall away after having gone so far in the profession of the religion. (1.) The greatness of the sin of apostasy. It is *crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame*. They declare that they approve of what the Jews did in crucifying Christ, and that they would be glad to do the same thing again if it were in their power. They pour the greatest contempt upon the Son of God, and therefore upon God himself, who expects all should reverence his Son, and honour him as they honour the Father. They do what in them lies to represent Christ and Christianity as a shameful thing, and would have him to be a public shame and reproach. This is the nature of apostasy. (2.) The great misery of apostates. [1.] It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. It is extremely hazardous. Very few instances can be given of those who have gone so far and fallen away, and yet ever have been brought to true repentance, such a repentance as is indeed a renovation of the soul. Some have thought this is the sin against the Holy Ghost, but without ground. The sin here mentioned is plainly apostasy both from the truth and the ways of Christ. God can renew them to repentance, but he seldom does it; and with men themselves it is impossible. [2.] Their misery is exemplified by a proper similitude, taken from the ground that after much cultivation brings forth nothing but briars and thorns; *and therefore is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned*, v. 8. To give this the greater force here is observed the difference that there is between the good ground and the bad, that these contraries, being set one over against the other, illustrate each other. *First* Here is a description of the good ground: *It drinketh in the rain that cometh often upon it*. Believers do not only taste of the word of God, but they drink it in; and this good ground bringeth forth fruit answerable to the cost laid out, for the honour of Christ and the comfort of his faithful ministers, who are, under Christ, dressers of the ground. And this fruit-field or garden receives the blessing. God declares

fruitful Christians blessed, and all wise and good men account them blessed: they are blessed with increase of grace, and with further establishment and glory at last. *Secondly*, Here is the different case of the bad ground: It *bears briers and thorns*; it is not only barren of good fruit, but fruitful in that which is bad, briers and thorns, fruitful in sin and wickedness, which are troublesome and hurtful to all about them, and will be most so to sinners themselves at last; and then such ground is rejected. God will concern himself no more about such wicked apostates; he will let them alone, and cast them out of his care; he will command the clouds that they rain no more upon them. Divine influences shall be restrained; and that is not all, but such ground *is nigh unto cursing*; so far is it from receiving the blessing, that a dreadful curse hangs over it, though as yet, through the patience of God, the curse is not fully executed. *Lastly*, Its end is to be burned. Apostasy will be punished with everlasting burnings, the fire that shall never be quenched. This is the sad end to which apostasy leads, and therefore Christians should go on and grow in grace, lest, if they do not go forward, they should go backward, till they bring matters to this woeful extremity of sin and misery.

Verses 9-20

The apostle, having applied himself to the fears of the Hebrews, in order to excite their diligence and prevent their apostasy, now proceeds to apply himself to their hopes, and candidly declares the good hope he had concerning them, that they would persevere; and proposes to them the great encouragements they had in the way of their duty.

I. He freely and openly declares the good hope he had concerning them, that they would endure to the end: *But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you*, v. 9. Observe, 1. There are things that accompany salvation, things that are never separated from salvation, things that show the person to be in a state of salvation, and will issue in eternal salvation. 2. The things that accompany salvation are better things than ever any hypocrite or apostate enjoyed. They are better in their nature and in their issue. 3. It is our duty to hope well of those in whom nothing appears to the contrary. 4. Ministers must sometimes speak by way of caution to those of whose salvation they have good hopes. And those who have in themselves good hopes, as to their eternal salvation, should yet consider seriously how fatal a disappointment it would be if they should fall short. Thus they are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

II. He proposes arguments and encouragements to them to go on in the way of their duty. 1. That God had wrought a principle of holy love and charity in them, which had discovered itself in suitable works that would not be forgotten of God: *God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love*, v. 10. Good works and labour proceeding from love to God are commendable; and what is done to any in the name of God shall not go unrewarded. What is done to the saints, as such, God takes as done to himself. 2. Those who expect a gracious reward for the labour of love must continue in it as long as they have ability and opportunity: *You have ministered to the saints, and you do minister; and we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence*. 3. Those who persevere in a diligent discharge of their duty shall attain to the full assurance of hope in the end. Observe, (1.) Full assurance is a higher degree of hope, is full assurance of hope; they differ not in nature, but only in degree. (2.) Full assurance is attainable by great diligence and perseverance to the end.

III. He proceeds to set before them caution and counsel how to attain this full assurance of hope to the end. 1. That they should

not be slothful. Slothfulness will clothe a man with rags: they must not love their ease, nor lose their opportunities. 2. That they would follow the good examples of those who had gone before, v. 12. Here learn, (1.) There are some who from assurance have gone to inherit the promises. They believed them before, now they inherit them; they have got safely to heaven. (2.) The way by which they came to the inheritance was that of faith and patience. These graces were implanted in their souls, and drawn forth into act and exercise in their lives. If we ever expect to inherit as they do, we must follow them in the way of faith and patience; and those who do thus follow them in the way shall overtake them at the end, and be partakers of the same blessedness.

IV. The apostle closes the chapter with a clear and full account of the assured truth of the promises of God, v. 13, *to the end*. They are all confirmed by the oath of God, and they are all founded in the eternal counsel of God, and therefore may be depended upon.

1. They are all confirmed by the oath of God. He has not only given his people his word, and his hand and seal, but his oath. And here, you will observe, he specifies the oath of God to Abraham, which, being sworn to him as the father of the faithful, remains in full force and virtue to all true believers: *When God made a promise unto Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself*. Observe, (1.) What was the promise: *Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee*. The blessing of God is the blessedness of his people; and those whom he has blessed indeed he will go on to bless, and will multiply blessings, till he has brought them to perfect blessedness. (2.) What was the oath by which this promise was ratified: *He swore by himself*. He staked down his own being and his own blessedness upon it; no greater security can be given or desired. (3.) How was that oath accomplished. Abraham, in due time, obtained the promise. It was made good to him after he had patiently endured. [1.] There is always an interval, and sometimes a long one, between the promise and the performance. [2.] That interval is a trying time to believers, whether they have patience to endure to the end. [3.] Those who patiently endure shall assuredly obtain the blessedness promised, as sure as Abraham did. [4.] The end and design of an oath is to make the promise sure, and to encourage those to whom it is made to wait with patience till the time for performance comes, v. 16. An oath with men is for confirmation, and is an end of all strife. This is the nature and design of an oath, in which men swear by the greater, not by creatures, but by the Lord himself; and it is to put an end to all dispute about the matter, both to disputes within our own breasts (doubts and distrusts), and disputes with others, especially with the promiser. Now, if God would condescend to take an oath to his people, he will surely remember the nature and design of it.

2. The promises of God are all founded in his eternal counsel; and this counsel of his is an immutable counsel. (1.) The promise of blessedness which God has made to believers is not a rash and hasty thing, but the result of God's eternal purpose. (2.) This purpose of God was agreed upon in counsel, and settled there between the eternal Father, Son, and Spirit. (3.) These counsels of God can never be altered; they are immutable. God never needs to change his counsels; for nothing new can arise to him who sees the end from the beginning.

3. The promises of God, which are founded upon these immutable counsels of God, and confirmed by the oath of God, may safely be depended upon; for here we have two immutable things, the counsel and the oath of God, in which it is impossible

for God to lie, contrary to his nature as well as to his will. Here observe,

(1.) Who they are to whom God has given such full security of happiness. [1.] They are the heirs of the promise: such as have a title to the promises by inheritance, by virtue of their new birth, and union with Christ. We are all by nature children of wrath. The curse is the inheritance we are born to: it is by a new and heavenly birth that any are born heirs to the promise. [2.] They are such as have fled for refuge to the hope set before them. Under the law there were cities of refuge provided for those who were pursued by the avenger of blood. Here is a much better refuge prepared by the gospel, a refuge for all sinners who shall have the heart to flee to it; yea, though they have been the chief of sinners.

(2.) What God's design towards them is, in giving them such securities—that they might have strong consolation. Observe, [1.] God is concerned for the consolation of believers, as well as for their sanctification; he would have his children walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. [2.] The consolations of God are strong enough to support his people under their strongest trials. The comforts of this world are too weak to bear up the soul under temptation, persecution, and death; but the consolations of the Lord are neither few nor small.

(3.) What use the people of God should make of their hope and comfort, that most refreshing and comfortable hope of eternal blessedness that God has given them. This is, and must be, unto them, for *an anchor to the soul, sure and stedfast*, etc., v. 19. Here, [1.] We are in this world as a ship at sea, liable to be tossed up and down, and in danger of being cast away. Our souls are the vessels. The comforts, expectations, graces, and happiness of our souls are the precious cargo with which these vessels are loaded. Heaven is the harbour to which we sail. The temptations, persecutions, and afflictions that we encounter, are the winds and waves that threaten our shipwreck. [2.] We have need of an anchor to keep us sure and steady, or we are in continual danger. [3.] Gospel hope is our anchor; as in our day of battle it is our helmet, so in our stormy passage through this world it is our anchor. [4.] It is sure and stedfast, or else it could not keep us so. *First*, It is sure in its own nature; for it is the special work of God in the soul. It is a good hope through grace; it is not a flattering hope made out of the spider's web, but it is a true work of God, it is a strong and substantial thing. *Secondly*, It is stedfast as to its object; it is an anchor that has taken good hold, it enters that which is within the veil; it is an anchor that is cast upon the rock, the Rock of ages. It does not seek to fasten in the sands, but enters within the veil, and fixes there upon Christ; he is the object, he is the anchor—hold of the believer's hope. As an unseen glory within the veil is what the believer is hoping for, so an unseen Jesus within the veil is the foundation of his hope; the free grace of God, the merits and mediation of Christ, and the powerful influences of his Spirit, are the grounds of his hope, and so it is a stedfast hope. Jesus Christ is the object and ground of the believer's hope, and so it is a stedfast hope. Jesus Christ is the object and ground of the believer's hope in several respects. 1. As he has entered within the veil, to intercede with God, in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered up without the veil: hope fastens upon his sacrifice and intercession. 2. As he is the forerunner of his people, gone within the veil, to prepare a place for them, and to assure them that they shall follow him; he is the earnest and first fruits of believers, both in his resurrection and in his ascension. 3. And he abides there, a high priest after the order of Melchisedec, a priest for ever, whose priesthood shall never cease, never fail, till he has accomplished its whole work and design, which is the full and final happiness of all who have believed on Christ. Now

this should engage us to clear up our interest in Christ, that we may fix our hopes in him as our forerunner, that has entered thither for us, for our sakes, for our safety, to watch over our highest interest and concerns. Let us then love heaven the more on his account, and long to be there with him, where we shall be for ever safe, and for ever satisfied.

Chapter 7

The doctrine of the priestly office of Christ is so excellent in itself, and so essential a part of the Christian faith, that the apostle loves to dwell upon it. Nothing made the Jews so fond of the Levitical dispensation as the high esteem they had of their priesthood, and it was doubtless a sacred and most excellent institution; it was a very severe threatening denounced against the Jews (Hos. 3:4), that the children of Israel should abide many days without a prince or priest, and without a sacrifice, and with an ephod, and without teraphim. Now the apostle assures them that by receiving the Lord Jesus they would have a much better high priest, a priesthood of a higher order, and consequently a better dispensation or covenant, a better law and testament; this he shows in this chapter, where, I. We have a more particular account of Melchisedec (v. 1-3). II. The superiority of his priesthood to that of Aaron (v. 4-10). III. An accommodation of all to Christ, to show the superior excellency of his person, office, and covenant (v. 11 to the end).

Verses 1-10

The foregoing chapter ended with a repetition of what had been cited once and again before out of Ps. 110:4, *Jesus, a high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec*. Now this chapter is as a sermon upon that text; here the apostle sets before them some of the strong meat he had spoken of before, hoping they would by greater diligence be better prepared to digest it.

I. The great question that first offers itself is, Who was this Melchisedec? All the account we have of him in the Old Testament is in Gen. 14:18, etc., and in Ps. 110:4. Indeed we are much in the dark about him; God has thought fit to leave us so, that this Melchisedec might be a more lively type of him whose generation none can declare. If men will not be satisfied with what is revealed, they must rove about in the dark in endless conjectures, some fancying him to have been an angel, others the Holy Ghost; but,

1. The opinions concerning him that are best worthy our consideration are these three:—(1.) The rabbin, and most of the Jewish writers, think he was Shem the son of Noah who was king and priest to their ancestors, after the manner of the other patriarchs; but it is not probable that he should thus change his name. Besides, we have no account of his settling in the land of Canaan. (2.) Many Christian writers have thought him to be Jesus Christ himself, appearing by a special dispensation and privilege to Abraham in the flesh, and who was known to Abraham by the name *Melchisedec*, which agrees very well to Christ, and to what is said, Jn. 8:56, *Abraham saw his day and rejoiced*. Much may be said for this opinion, and what is said in v. 3 does not seem to agree with any mere man; but then it seems strange to make Christ a type of himself. (3.) The most general opinion is that he was a Canaanite king, who reigned in Salem, and kept up religion and the worship of the true God; that he was raised to be a type of Christ, and was honoured by Abraham as such.

2. But we shall leave these conjectures, and labour to understand, as far as we can, what is here said of him by the apostle, and how Christ is represented thereby, v. 1-3. (1.) Melchisedec was a king, and so is the Lord Jesus—a king of God's anointing; the government is laid upon his shoulders, and he rules over all for the good of his people. (2.) That he was *king of righteousness*: his name signifies *the righteous king*. Jesus Christ is a rightful and a righteous king—rightful in his title, righteous in his

government. He is the Lord our righteousness; he has fulfilled all righteousness, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, and he loves righteousness and righteous persons, and hates iniquity. (3.) He was king of Salem, that is, king of peace; first king of righteousness, and after that king of peace. So is our Lord Jesus; he by his righteousness made peace, the fruit of righteousness is peace. Christ speaks peace, creates peace, is our peace-maker. (4.) He was *priest of the most high God*, qualified and anointed in an extraordinary manner to be his priest among the Gentiles. So is the Lord Jesus; he is the priest of the most high God, and the Gentiles must come to God by him; it is only through his priesthood that we can obtain reconciliation and remission of sin. (5.) He was *without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life*, v. 3. This must not be understood according to the letter; but the scripture has chosen to set him forth as an extraordinary person, without giving us his genealogy, that he might be a fitter type of Christ, who as man was without father, as God without mother; whose priesthood is without descent, did not descend to him from another, nor from him to another, but is personal and perpetual. (6.) That he *met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him*. The incident is recorded Gen. 14:18, etc. He brought forth bread and wine to refresh Abraham and his servants when they were weary; he gave as a king, and blessed as a priest. Thus our Lord Jesus meets his people in their spiritual conflicts, refreshes them, renews their strength, and blesses them. (7.) That *Abraham gave him a tenth part of all* (v. 2), that is, as the apostle explains it, of all *the spoils*; and this Abraham did as an expression of his gratitude for what Melchisedec had done for him, or as a testimony of his homage and subjection to him as a king, or as an offering vowed and dedicated to God, to be presented by his priest. And thus are we obliged to make all possible returns of love and gratitude to the Lord Jesus for all the rich and royal favours we receive from him, to pay our homage and subjection to him as our King, and to put all our offerings into his hands, to be presented by him to the Father in the incense of his own sacrifice. (8.) That this Melchisedec was *made like unto the Son of God, and abideth a priest continually*. He bore the image of God in his piety and authority, and stands upon record as an immortal high priest; the ancient type of him who is the eternal and only-begotten of the Father, who abideth a priest for ever.

II. Let us now consider (as the apostle advises) how great this Melchisedec was, and how far his priesthood was above that of the order of Aaron (v. 4, 5, etc.): *Now consider how great this man was*, etc. The greatness of this man and his priesthood appears, 1. From Abraham's paying the tenth of the spoils unto him; and it is well observed that Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec in Abraham, v. 9. Now Levi received the office of the priesthood from God, and was to take tithes of the people, yet even Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec, as to a greater and higher priest than himself; therefore that high priest who should afterwards appear, of whom Melchisedec was a type, must be much superior to any of the Levitical priests, who paid tithes, in Abraham, to Melchisedec. And now by this argument of persons doing things that are matters of right or injury in the loins of their predecessors we have an illustration how we may be said to have sinned in Adam, and fallen with him in his first transgression. We were in Adam's loins when he sinned, and the guilt and depravity contracted by the human nature when it was in our first parents are equitably imputed and derived to the same nature as it is in all other persons naturally descended from them. They justly adhere to the nature, and it must be by an act of grace if ever they be taken away. 2. From Melchisedec's blessing of Abraham, *who had the promises; and, without contradiction, the less is blessed of the greater*, v. 6,

7. Here observe, (1.) Abraham's great dignity and felicity—that he had the promises. He was one in covenant with God, to whom God had given exceedingly great and precious promises. That man is rich and happy indeed who has an estate in bills and bonds under God's own hand and seal. These promises are both of the life that now is and of that which is to come; this honour have all those who receive the Lord Jesus, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. (2.) Melchisedec's greater honour—in that it was his place and privilege to bless Abraham; and it is an uncontested maxim *that the less is blessed of the greater*, v. 7. He who gives the blessing is greater than he who receives it; and therefore Christ, the antitype of Melchisedec, the meriter and Mediator of all blessings to the children of men, must be greater than all the priests of the order of Aaron.

Verses 11-28

Observe the necessity there was of raising up another priest, after the order of Melchisedec and not after the order of Aaron, by whom that perfection should come which could not come by the Levitical priesthood, which therefore must be changed, and the whole economy with it, v. 11, 12, etc. Here,

I. It is asserted that perfection could not come by the Levitical priesthood and the law. They could not put those who came to them into the perfect enjoyment of the good things they pointed out to them; they could only show them the way.

II. That therefore another priest must be raised up, after the order of Melchisedec, by whom, and his law of faith, perfection might come to all who obey him; and, blessed be God, that we may have perfect holiness and perfect happiness by Christ in the covenant of grace, according to the gospel, for we are complete in him.

III. It is asserted that the priesthood being changed there must of necessity be a change of the law; there being so near a relation between the priesthood and the law, the dispensation could not be the same under another priesthood; a new priesthood must be under a new regulation, managed in another way, and by rules proper to its nature and order.

IV. It is not only asserted, but proved, that the priesthood and law are changed, v. 13, 14. The priesthood and law by which perfection could not come are abolished, and a priest has arisen, and a dispensation is now set up, by which true believers may be made perfect. Now that there is such a change is obvious.

1. There is a change in the tribe of which the priesthood comes. Before, it was the tribe of Levi; but our great high priest sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning the priesthood, v. 14. This change of the family shows a real change of the law of the priesthood.

2. There is a change in the form and order of making the priests. Before, in the Levitical priesthood, they were made after the law of a carnal commandment; but our great high priest was made after the power of an endless life. The former law appointed that the office should descend, upon the death of the father, to his eldest son, according to the order of carnal or natural generation; for none of the high priests under the law were without father or mother, or without descent: they had not life and immortality in themselves. They had both beginning of days and end of life; and so the carnal commandment, or law of primogeniture, directed their succession, as it did in matters of civil right and inheritance. But the law by which Christ was constituted a priest, after the order of Melchisedec, was the power of an endless life. The life and immortality which he had in himself were his right and title to the priesthood, not his descent from former priests. This makes a great difference in the

priesthood, and in the economy too, and gives the preference infinitely to Christ and the gospel. The very law which constituted the Levitical priesthood supposed the priests to be weak, frail, dying, creatures, not able to preserve their own natural lives, but who must be content and glad to survive in their posterity after the flesh; much less could they, by any power or authority they had, convey spiritual life and blessedness to those who came to them. But the high priest of our profession holds his office by that innate power of endless life which he has in himself, not only to preserve himself alive, but to communicate spiritual and eternal life to all those who duly rely upon his sacrifice and intercession. Some thing *the law of the carnal commandment* refers to the external rites of consecration, and the carnal offerings that were made; but *the power of an endless life* to the spiritual living sacrifices proper to the gospel, and the spiritual and eternal privileges purchased by Christ, who was consecrated by the eternal Spirit of life that he received without measure.

3. There is a change in the efficacy of the priesthood. The former was weak and unprofitable, made nothing perfect; the latter brought in a better hope, by which we draw near to God, v. 18, 19. The Levitical priesthood brought nothing to perfection: it could not justify men's persons from guilt; it could not sanctify them from inward pollution; it could not cleanse the consciences of the worshippers from dead works; all it could do was to lead them to the antitype. But the priesthood of Christ carries in it, and brings along with it, a better hope; it shows us the true foundation of all the hope we have towards God for pardon and salvation; it more clearly discovers the great objects of our hope; and so it tends to work in us a more strong and lively hope of acceptance with God. By this hope we are encouraged to draw nigh unto God, to enter into a covenant-union with him, to live a life of converse and communion with him. We may now draw near with a true heart, and with the full assurance of faith, having our minds sprinkled from an evil conscience. The former priesthood rather kept men at a distance, and under a spirit of bondage.

4. There is a change in God's way of acting in this priesthood. He has taken an oath to Christ, which he never did to any of the order of Aaron. God never gave them any such assurance of their continuance, never engaged himself by oath or promise that theirs should be an everlasting priesthood, and therefore gave them no reason to expect the perpetuity of it, but rather to look upon it as a temporary law. But Christ was made a priest with the oath of God: *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec*, v. 21. Here God has upon oath declared the immutability, excellency, efficacy, and eternity, of the priesthood of Christ.

5. There is a change in that covenant of which the priesthood was a security and the priest a surety; that is, a change in the dispensation of that covenant. The gospel dispensation is more full, free, perspicuous, spiritual, and efficacious, than that of the law. Christ is in this gospel covenant a surety for us to God and for God to us, to see that the articles be performed on both parts He, as surety, has united the divine and human nature together in his own person, and therein given assurance of reconciliation; and he has, as surety, united God and man together in the bond of the everlasting covenant. He pleads with men to keep their covenant with god, and he pleads with God that he will fulfil his promises to men, which he is always ready to do in a way suitable to his majesty and glory, that is, through a Mediator.

6. There is a remarkable change in the number of the priests under these different orders. In that of Aaron there was a

multitude of priests, of high priests, not at once, but successively; but in this of Christ there is but one and the same. The reason is plain, The Levitical priests were many, because *they were not suffered to continue by reason of death*. Their office, how high and honourable soever, could not secure them from dying; and, as one died, another must succeed, and after a while must give place to a third, till the number had become very great. But this our high priest continues for ever, and his priesthood is *aparatōn*—*an unchangeable one*, that does not pass from one to another, as the former did; it is always in the same hand. There can be no vacancy in this priesthood, no hour nor moment in which the people are without a priest to negotiate their spiritual concerns in heaven. Such a vacancy might be very dangerous and prejudicial to them; but this is their safety and happiness, that this ever-living high priest is able to save to the utmost—in all times, in all cases, in every juncture—all who come to God by him, v. 25. So that here is a manifest alteration much for the better.

7. There is a remarkable difference in the moral qualifications of the priests. Those who were of the order of Aaron were not only mortal men, but sinful men, who had their sinful as well as natural infirmities; they needed to offer up sacrifices first for their own sins and then for the people. But our high priest, who was consecrated by the word of the oath, needed only to offer up once for the people, never at all for himself; for he has not only an immutable consecration to his office, but an immutable sanctity in his person. He is *such a high priest as became us, holy, harmless, and undefiled*, etc., v. 26–28. Here observe, (1.) Our case, as sinners, needed a high priest to make satisfaction and intercession for us. (2.) No priest could be suitable or sufficient for our reconciliation to God but one who was perfectly righteous in his own person; he must be righteous in himself, or he could not be a propitiation for our sin, or our advocate with the Father. (3.) The Lord Jesus was exactly such a high priest as we wanted, for he has a personal holiness, absolutely perfect. Observe the description we have of the personal holiness of Christ expressed in various terms, all of which some learned divines consider as relating to his perfect purity. [1.] He is holy, perfectly free from all the habits or principles of sin, not having the least disposition to it in his nature; no sin dwells in him, though it does in the best of Christians, not the least sinful inclination [2.] He is harmless, perfectly free from all actual transgression, has done no violence, nor is there any deceit in his mouth, never did the least wrong to God or man. [3.] He is undefiled, he was never accessory to other men's sins. It is a difficult thing to keep ourselves pure, so as not to partake in the guilt of other men's sins, by contributing in some way towards them, or not doing what we ought to prevent them. Christ was undefiled; though he took upon him the guilt of our sins, yet he never involved himself in the fact and fault of them. [4.] He is separate from sinners, not only in his present state (having entered as our high priest into the holiest of all, into which nothing defiled can enter), but in his personal purity: he has no such union with sinners, either natural or federal, as can devolve upon him original sin. This comes upon us by virtue of our natural and federal union with the first Adam, we descending from him in the ordinary way. But Christ was, by his ineffable conception in the virgin, separate from sinners; though he took a true human nature, yet the miraculous way in which it was conceived set him upon a separate footing from all the rest of mankind. [5.] He is made higher than the heavens. Most expositors understand this concerning his state of exaltation in heaven, at the right hand of God, to perfect the design of his priesthood. But Dr. Goodwin thinks this may be very justly referred to the personal holiness of Christ, which is greater and more perfect than the holiness of the hosts of heaven, that is, the holy angels

themselves, who, though they are free from sin, yet are not in themselves free from all possibility of sinning. And therefore we read, *God putteth no trust in his holy ones, and he chargeth his angels with folly* (Job 4:18), that is, with weakness and peccability. They may be angels one hour and devils another, as many of them were; and that the holy angels shall not now fall does not proceed from an indefectibility of nature, but from the election of God; they are elect angels. It is very probable that this explanation of the words, *made higher than the heavens*, may be thought too much strained, and that it ought to be understood of the dignity of Christ's state, and not the perfect holiness of his person; and the rather because it is said he was *made* higher *genomenos*; but it is well known that this word is used in a neutral sense, as where it is said, *genestheμ ho Theos aleptheμs—Let God be true*. The other characters in the verse plainly belong to the personal perfection of Christ in holiness, as opposed to the sinful infirmities of the Levitical priests; and it seems congruous to think this must do so too, if it may be fairly taken in such a sense; and it appears yet more probable, since the validity and prevalency of Christ's priesthood in v. 27 are placed in the impartiality and disinterestedness of it. He needed not to offer up for himself: it was a disinterested mediation; he mediated for that mercy for others which he did not need for himself; had he needed it himself, he had been a party, and could not have been a Mediator—a criminal, and could not have been an advocate for sinners. Now, to render his mediation the more impartial and disinterested, it seems requisite not only that he had no present need of that favour for himself which he mediated for in behalf of others, but that he never could stand in need of it. Though he needed it not to-day, yet if he knew he might be in such circumstances as to need it to-morrow, or at any future time, he must have been thought to have had some eye upon his own interest, and therefore could not act with impartial regard and pure zeal for the honour of God on one hand, and tender pure compassion for poor sinners on the other. I pretend not here to follow the notes of our late excellent expositor, into whose labours we have entered, but have taken the liberty to vindicate this notion of the learned Dr. Goodwin from the exceptions that I know have been made to it; and I have the rather done it because, if it will hold good, it gives us further evidence how necessary it was that the Mediator should be God, since no mere creature is of himself possessed of that impeccability which will set him above all possible need of favour and mercy for himself

Chapter 8

In this chapter the apostle pursues his former subject, the priesthood of Christ. And, I. He sums up what he had already said (v. 1, 2). II. He sets before them the necessary parts of the priestly office (v. 3-5). And, III. Largely illustrates the excellency of the priesthood of Christ, by considering the excellency of that new dispensation or covenant for which Christ is the Mediator (v. 6 to the end).

Verses 1-5

Here is, I. A summary recital of what had been said before concerning the excellency of Christ's priesthood, showing what we have in Christ, where he now resides, and what sanctuary he is the minister of, v. 1, 2. Observe, 1. What we have in Christ; we have a high priest, and such a high priest as no other people ever had, no age of the world, or of the church, ever produced; all others were but types and shadows of this high priest. He is adequately fitted and absolutely sufficient to all the intents and purposes of a high priest, both with respect to the honour of God and the happiness of men and himself; the great honour of all those who have an interest in him. 2. Where he now resides: *He sits on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high*, that is, of the glorious God of heaven. There the Mediator is placed, and he is possessed of all authority and power both in heaven and upon earth. This is the reward of his humiliation. This authority he exercises for the glory of his Father, for his own honour, and for the happiness of all who belong to him; and he will by his almighty power bring every one of them in their own order to the right hand of God in heaven, as members of his mystical body, that where he is they may be also. 3. What is that sanctuary of which he is a minister: *Of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not man*, v. 2. The tabernacle which was pitched by man, according to the appointment of God. There was an outer part, in which was the altar where they were to offer their sacrifices, which typified Christ dying; and there was an interior part within the veil, which typified Christ interceding for the people in heaven. Now this tabernacle Christ never entered into; but, having finished the work of satisfaction in the true tabernacle of his own body, he is now a minister of the sanctuary, the holy of holies, the true tabernacle in heaven, there taking care of his people's affairs, interceding with God for them, that their sins may be pardoned and their persons and services accepted, through the merit of his sacrifice. He is not only in heaven enjoying great dominion and dignity, but, as the high priest of his church, executing this office for them all in general, and every member of the church in particular. II. The apostle sets before the Hebrews the necessary parts of Christ's priesthood, or what it was that belonged to that office, in conformity to what every high priest is ordained to, v. 3, 4. 1. *Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices*. Whatever was brought by the people to be presented to God, whether expiatory sacrifices, or peace-offerings, or thank-offerings, must be offered by the priest, who was to expiate their guilt by the blood of the sacrifice, and perfume their gifts and services by his holy incense, to render their persons and performances typically acceptable; so then it necessarily belongs to the priesthood of Christ that he should have somewhat to offer; and he, as the antitype, had himself to offer, his human nature upon the altar of his divine nature, as the great atoning sacrifice that finished transgression, and made an end of sin once for all; and he has the incense of his own righteousness and merits too to offer with all that his people offer up to God by him, to

render them acceptable. We must not dare to approach to God, or to present any thing to him, but in and through Christ, depending upon his merits and mediation; for if we are accepted, it is in the Beloved. 2. Christ must now execute his priesthood in heaven, in the holy of holies, the true tabernacle which the Lord hath fixed. Thus the type must be fully answered; having finished the work of sacrificing here, he must go into heaven, to present his righteousness and to make intercession there. For, (1.) *If Christ were on earth, he would not be a priest* (v. 4), that is, not according to the Levitical law, as not being of the line of that priesthood; and so long as that priesthood continued there must be a strict regard paid to the divine institution in everything. (2.) All the services of the priest, under the law, as well as every thing in that tabernacle which was framed according to the pattern in the mount, were only exemplars and shadows of heavenly things, v. 5. Christ is the substance and end of the law for righteousness. Something therefore there must be in Christ's priesthood that answers to the high priest's entering within the veil to make intercession, without which he could not have been a perfect priest; and what is this but the ascension of Christ into heaven, and his appearance there in the sight of God for his people, to present their prayers, and plead their cause? So that, if he had still continued on earth, he could not have been a perfect priest; and an imperfect one he could not be.

Verses 6-13

In this part of the chapter, the apostle illustrates and confirms the superior excellency of the priesthood of Christ above that of Aaron, from the excellency of that covenant, or that dispensation of the covenant of grace, of which Christ was the Mediator (v. 6): his ministry is more excellent, by how much he is the Mediator of a better covenant. The body and soul too of all divinity (as some observe) consist very much in rightly distinguishing between the two covenants—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace; and between the two dispensations of the covenant of grace—that under the Old Testament and that under the New. Now observe,

I. What is here said of the old covenant, or rather of the old dispensation of the covenant of grace: of this it is said, 1. That it was made with the fathers of the Jewish nation at mount Sinai (v. 9), and Moses was the Mediator of that covenant, when God took them by the hand, to lead them out of the land of Egypt, which intimates the great affection, condescension, and tender care of God towards them. 2. That this covenant was not found faultless (v. 7, 8); it was a dispensation of darkness and dread, tending to bondage, and only a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; it was perfect in its kind, and fitted to answer its end, but very imperfect in comparison of the gospel. 3. That it was not sure or stedfast; *for the Jews continued not in that covenant, and the Lord regarded them not*, v. 9. They dealt ungratefully with their God, and cruelly with themselves, and fell under God's displeasure. God will regard those who remain in his covenant, but will reject those who cast away his yoke from them. 4. That it is decayed, grown old, and vanisheth away, v. 13. It is antiquated, canceled, out of date, of no more use in gospel times than candles are when the sun has risen. Some think the covenant of peculiarity did not quite decay till the destruction of Jerusalem, though it was forfeited at the death of Christ, and was made old, and was now to vanish and perish, and the Levitical priesthood vanished with it.

II. What is here said of the New-Testament dispensation, to prove the superior excellency of Christ's ministry. It is said,

1. That it is a better covenant (v. 6), a more clear and comfortable dispensation and discovery of the grace of God to sinners, bringing in holy light and liberty to the soul. It is without fault, well ordered in all things. It requires nothing but what it promises grace to perform. It accepts of godly sincerity, accounting it gospel perfection. Every transgression does not turn us out of covenant; all is put into a good and safe hand.

2. That it is established upon better promises, more clear and express, more spiritual, more absolute. The promises of spiritual and eternal blessings are in this covenant positive and absolute; the promises of temporal blessings are with a wise and kind proviso, as far as shall be for God's glory and his people's good. This covenant contains in it promises of assistance and acceptance in duty, promises of progress and perseverance in grace and holiness, of bliss and glory in heaven, which were more obscurely shadowed forth by the promises of the land of Canaan, a type of heaven.

3. It is a new covenant, even that new covenant that God long ago declared he would make with the house of Israel, that is, all the Israel of God; this was promised in Jer. 31:31, 32, and accomplished in Christ. This will always be a new covenant, in which all who truly take hold of it shall be always found preserved by the power of God. It is God's covenant; his mercy, love, and grace moved for it; his wisdom devised it; his Son purchased it; his wisdom devised it; his Son purchased it; his Spirit brings souls into it, and builds them up in it.

4. The articles of this covenant are very extraordinary, which are sealed between God and his people by baptism and the Lord's supper; whereby they bind themselves to their part, and God assures them he will do his part; and his is the main and principal part, on which his people depend for grace and strength to do theirs. Here,

(1.) God articles with his people *that he will put his laws into their minds and write them in their hearts*, v. 10. He once wrote his laws to them, now he will write his laws in them; that is, he will give them understanding to know and to believe his law; he will give them memories to retain them; he will give them hearts to love them and consciences to recognize them; he will give them courage to profess them and power to put them in practice; the whole habit and frame of their souls shall be a table and transcript of the law of God. This is the foundation of the covenant; and, when this is laid, duty will be done wisely, sincerely, readily, easily, resolutely, constantly, and comfortably.

(2.) He articles with them to take them into a near and very honourable relation to himself. [1.] He will be to them a God; that is, he will be all that to them, and do all that for them, that God can be and do. Nothing more can be said in a thousand volumes than is comprehended in these few words: *I will be a God to them*. [2.] They shall be to him a people, to love, honour, observe, and obey him in all things; complying with his cautions, conforming to his commands, comporting with his providences, copying out his example, taking complacency in his favour. This those must do and will do who have God for their God; this they are bound to do as their part of the contract; this they shall do, for God will enable them to do it, as an evidence that he is their God and that they are his people; for it is God himself who first founds the relation, and then fills it up with grace suitable and sufficient, and helps them in their measure to fill it up with love and duty; so that God engages both for himself and them.

(3.) He articles with them that they shall grow more and more acquainted with their God (v. 11): *They shall all know me from the least to the greatest*, insomuch that there shall not be so much need of one neighbour teaching another the knowledge of

God. Here observe, [1.] In the want of better instruction, one neighbour should be teaching another to know the Lord, as they have ability and opportunity for it. [2.] This private instruction shall not be so necessary under the New Testament as it was under the Old. The old dispensation was shadowy, dark, ritual, and less understood; their priests preached but seldom, and but a few at a time, and the Spirit of God was more sparingly given out. But under the new dispensation there shall be such abundance of public qualified preachers of the gospel, and dispensers of ordinances stately in the solemn assemblies, and so great a flocking to them, as doves to their windows, and such a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of God to make the ministration of the gospel effectual, that there shall be a mighty increase and spreading of Christian knowledge in persons of all sorts, of each sex, and of all ages. O that this promise might be fulfilled in our days, that the hand of God may be with his ministers, that a great number may believe and be turned to the Lord!

(4.) God articles with them about the pardon of their sins, as what always accompanies the true knowledge of God (v. 12): *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness*, etc. Observe, [1.] The freeness of this pardon. It does not result from merit in man, but from mercy in God; he pardons for his own name's sake. [2.] The fullness of this pardon; it extends to their unrighteousness, sins, and iniquities; to all kinds of sin, to sins highly aggravated. [3.] The fixedness of this pardon. It is so final and so fixed that God will remember their sins no more; he will not recall his pardon; he will not only forgive their sins, but forget them, treat them as if he had forgotten them. This pardoning mercy is connected with all other spiritual mercies. Unpardoned sin prevents mercy, and pulls down judgments; but the pardon of sin prevents judgment, and opens a wide door to all spiritual blessings; it is the effect of that mercy that is from everlasting, and the earnest of that mercy that shall be to everlasting. This is the excellency of the new dispensation, and these are the articles of it; and therefore we have no reason to repine, but great reason to rejoice that the former dispensation is antiquated and has vanished away.

Chapter 9

The apostle, having declared the Old-Testament dispensation antiquated and vanishing away, proceeds to let the Hebrews see the correspondence there was between the Old Testament and the New; and that whatever was excellent in the Old was typical and representative of the New, which therefore must as far excel the Old as the substance does the shadow. The Old Testament was never intended to be rested in, but to prepare for the institutions of the gospel. And here he treats, I. Of the tabernacle, the place of worship (v. 1-5). II. Of the worship and services performed in the tabernacle (v. 6, 7). III. He delivers the spiritual sense and the main design of all (v. 8 to the end).

Verses 1-7

Here, I. The apostle gives an account of the tabernacle, that place of worship which God appointed to be pitched on earth; it is called *a worldly* sanctuary, wholly of this world, as to the materials of which it was built, and a building that must be taken down; it is called a worldly *sanctuary*, because it was the court and palace of the King of Israel. God was their King, and, as other kings, had his court or place of residence, and attendants, furniture, and provision, suitable thereto. This tabernacle (of which we have the model, Ex. 25–27) was a moving temple, shadowing forth the unsettled state of the church militant, and the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. Now of this tabernacle it is said that it was divided into two parts, called a first and a second tabernacle, an inner and an outer part, representing the two states of the church militant and triumphant, and the two natures of Christ, human and divine. We are also told what was placed in each part of the tabernacle.

1. In the outer part: and there were several things, of which you have here a sort of schedule. (1.) The candlestick; doubtless not an empty and unlighted one, but where the lamps were always burning. And there was need of it, for there were no windows in the sanctuary; and this was to convince the Jews of the darkness and the mysterious nature of that dispensation. Their light was only candle-light, in comparison of the fullness of light which Christ, the Sun of righteousness, would bring along with him, and communicate to his people; for all our light is derived from him the fountain of light. (2.) The table and the show-bread set upon it. This table was set directly opposite to the candlestick, which shows that by light from Christ we must have communion with him and with one another. We must not come in the dark to his table, but by light from Christ must discern the Lord's body. On this table were placed twelve loaves for the twelve tribes of Israel, a loaf for a tribe, which stood from sabbath to sabbath, and on that day were renewed. This show-bread may be considered either as the provision of the palace (though the King of Israel needed it not, yet, in resemblance of the palaces of earthly kings, there must be this provision laid in weekly), or the provision made in Christ for the souls of his people, suitable to the wants and to the relief of their souls. He is the bread of life; in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; we may have fresh supplies from Christ, especially every Lord's day. This outer part is called *the sanctuary or holy*, because erected to the worship of a holy God, to represent a holy Jesus, and to entertain a holy people, for their further improvement in holiness.

2. We have an account of what was in the inner part of the sanctuary, which was within the second veil, and is called *the*

holiest of all. This second veil, which divided between the holy and the most holy place, was a type of the body of Christ, by the rending whereof not only a view, but a way, was opened for us into the holiest of all, the type of heaven itself. Now in this part were, (1.) The golden censer, which was to hold the incense, or the golden altar set up to burn the incense upon; both the one and the other were typical of Christ, of his pleasing and prevailing intercession which he makes in heaven, grounded upon the merits and satisfaction of his sacrifice, upon which we are to depend for acceptance and the blessing from God. (2.) The ark of the covenant overlaid round about with pure gold, v. 4. This typified Christ, his perfect obedience to the law and his fulfilling of all righteousness for us. Now here we are told both what was in this ark and what was over it. [1.] What was in it. *First, The golden pot that had manna*, which, when preserved by the Israelites in their own houses, contrary to the command of God, presently putrefied; but now, being by God's appointment deposited here in this house, was kept from putrefaction, always pure and sweet; and this to teach us that it is only in Christ that our persons, our graces, our performances are kept pure. It was also a type of the bread of life we have in Christ, the true ambrosia that gives immortality. This was also a memorial of God's miraculously feeding his people in the wilderness, that they might never forget such signal favour, nor distrust God for the time to come. *Secondly, Aaron's rod that budded*, and thereby showed that God had chosen him of the tribe of Levi to minister before him of all the tribes of Israel, and so an end was put to the murmuring of the people, and to their attempt to invade the priest's office, Num. 17. This was that rod of God with which Moses and Aaron wrought such wonders; and this was a type of Christ, who is styled *the man, the branch* (Zec. 6:12), by whom God has wrought wonders for the spiritual deliverance, defence, and supply of his people, and for the destruction of their enemies. It was a type of divine justice, by which Christ the Rock was smitten, and from whom the cool refreshing waters of life flow into our souls. *Thirdly, The tables of the covenant*, in which the moral law was written, signifying the regard God has to the preservation of his holy law, and the care we all ought to have that we keep the law of God—that this we can only do in and through Christ, by strength from him nor can our obedience be accepted but through him. [2.] What was over the ark (v. 5): *Over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat.* *First*, The mercy-seat, which was the covering of the ark; it was called *the propitiatory*, and it was of pure gold, as long and as broad as the ark in which the tables of the law were laid. It was an eminent type of Christ, and of his perfect righteousness, ever adequate to the dimensions of the law of God, and covering all our transgressions, interposing between the Shechinah, or symbol of God's presence, and our sinful failures, and covering them. *Secondly, The cherubim of glory* shadowing the mercy-seat, representing the holy angels of God, who take pleasure in looking into the great work of our redemption by Christ, and are ready to perform every good office, under the Redeemer, for those who are the heirs of salvation. The angels attended Christ at his birth, in his temptation, under his agonies, at his resurrection, and in his ascension, and will attend his second coming. God manifest in the flesh was seen, observed, visited, by the angels.

II. From the description of the place of worship in the Old-Testament dispensation, the apostle proceeds to speak of the duties and services performed in those places, v. 6. When the several parts and furniture of the tabernacle were thus settled, then what was to be done there?

1. The ordinary priests went always into the first tabernacle, to accomplish the service of God. Observe, (1.) None but priests

were to enter into the first part of the tabernacle, and this to teach us all that persons not qualified, not called of God, must not intrude into the office and work of the ministry. (2.) The ordinary priests were only to enter into the first part of the tabernacle, it would have been fatal presumption in them to have gone into the holiest of all; and this teaches us that even ministers themselves must know and keep in their proper stations, and not presume to usurp the prerogative of Christ, by offering up incense of their own, or adding their own inventions to the ordinances of Christ, or lording it over men's consciences. (3.) These ordinary priests were to enter into the first tabernacle always; that is, they were to devote themselves and all their time to the work of their office, and not alienate themselves at any time from it; they were to be in an habitual readiness for the discharge of their office, and at all stated appointed times were actually to attend to their work. (4.) The ordinary priests must enter into the first tabernacle, that they might there accomplish the service of God. They must not do the work of God partially or by halves, but stand complete in the whole of his will and counsel; not only beginning well, but proceeding well, and persevering to the end, fulfilling the ministry they had received.

2. Into the second, the interior part, went the high priest along, v. 7. This part was an emblem of heaven, and Christ's ascension thither. Here observe, (1.) None but the high priest must go into the holiest; so none but Christ could enter into heaven in his own name, by his own right, and by his own merits. (2.) In entering into the holiest, the high priest must first go through the outer sanctuary, and through the veil, signifying that Christ went to heaven through a holy life and a violent death; the veil of his flesh was rent asunder. (3.) The high priest entered but once a year into the holiest, and in this the antitype excels the type (as in every thing else), for he has entered once for all, during the whole dispensation of the gospel. (4.) The high priest must not enter without blood, signifying that Christ, having undertaken to be our high priest, could not have been admitted into heaven without shedding his blood for us, and that none of us can enter either into God's gracious presence here or his glorious presence hereafter, but by the blood of Jesus. (5.) The high priest, under the law, entering into the holiest, offered up that blood for himself and his own errors first, and then for the errors of the people, v. 7. This teaches us that Christ is a more excellent person and high priest than any under the law, for he has no errors of his own to offer for. And it teaches us that ministers, when in the name of Christ they intercede for others, must first apply the blood of Christ to themselves for their pardon. (6.) When the legal high priest had offered for himself, he must not stop there, but must also offer for the errors of the people. Our high priest, though he needs not to offer for himself, yet forgets not to offer for his people; he pleads the merit of his sufferings for the benefit of his people on earth. Observe, [1.] Sins are errors, and great errors, both in judgment and practice. We greatly err when we sin against God; and who can understand all his errors? [2.] They are such errors as leave guilt upon the conscience, not to be washed away but by the blood of Christ; and the sinful errors of priests and people must be all done away by the same means, the application of the blood of Christ; we must plead this blood on earth, while he is pleading it in heaven for us.

Verses 8-14

In these verses the apostle undertakes to deliver to us the mind and meaning of the Holy Ghost in all the ordinances of the tabernacle and legal economy, comprehending both place and worship. The scriptures of the Old Testament were given by

inspiration of God; holy men of old spoke and wrote as the Holy Ghost directed them. And these Old-Testament records are of great use and significance, not only to those who first received them, but even to Christians, who ought not to satisfy themselves with reading the institutes of the Levitical law, but should learn what the Holy Ghost signifies and suggests to them thereby. Now here are several things mentioned as the things that the Holy Ghost signified and certified to his people hereby.

I. That the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was standing, v. 8. This was one lesson the Holy Ghost would teach us by these types; the way to heaven was not so clear and plain, nor so much frequented, under the Old Testament as under the New. It is the honour of Christ and the gospel, and the happiness of those who live under it, that now life and immortality are brought to light. There was not that free access to God then that there is now; God has now opened a wider door; and there is room for more, yea, even for as many as are truly willing to return unto him by Christ.

II. That the first tabernacle was only a figure for the time then present, v. 9. It was a dark dispensation, and but of short continuance, only designed for awhile to typify the great things of Christ and the gospel, that were in due time to shine forth in their own brightness, and thereby cause all the shadows to flee away and disappear, as the stars before the rising sun.

III. That none of the gifts and sacrifices there offered could make the offerers perfect as pertaining to conscience (v. 9); that is, they could not take away the desert, or defilement, or dominion, of sin; they could not deliver conscience from a dread of the wrath of God; they could neither discharge the debts, nor resolve the doubts, of him who did the service. A man might run through them all in their several orders and frequent returns, and continue to do so all his days, and yet not find his conscience either pacified or purified by them; he might thereby be saved from corporal and temporal punishments that were threatened against the non-observers, but he could not be saved by them from sin or hell, as all those are who believe in Christ.

IV. The Holy Ghost hereby signifies that the Old-Testament institutions were by external carnal ordinances imposed upon them until the time of reformation, v. 10. Their imperfection lay in three things:—1. Their nature. They were but external and carnal meats and drinks, and divers washings. All these were bodily exercises, which profit little; they could only satisfy the flesh, or at best sanctify to the purifying of the flesh. 2. They were not such as were left indifferent to them to use or disuse, but they were imposed upon them by grievous corporal punishments, and this was ordered on purpose to make them look more to the promised Seed, and long more for him. 3. These were never designed for a perpetuity, but only to continue till the time of reformation, till the better things provided for them were actually bestowed upon them. Gospel times are and should be times of reformation,—of clearer light as to all things necessary to be known,—of greater love, inducing us to bear ill-will to none, but good-will to all, and to have complacency in all that are like God,—of greater liberty and freedom both of spirit and speech—and of a more holy living according to the rule of the gospel. We have far greater advantages under the gospel than they had under the law; and either we must be better or we shall be worse. A conversation becoming the gospel is an excellent way of living; nothing mean, foolish, vain, or servile becomes the gospel.

V. The Holy Ghost signifies to us hereby that we never make the right use of types but when we apply them to the antitype; and, whenever we do so, it will be very evident that the antitype (as in reason it should) greatly excels the type, which is the main drift and design of all that is said. And, as he writes to those who believed that Christ had come and that Jesus was the

Christ, so he very justly infers that he is infinitely above all legal high priests (v. 11, 12), and he illustrates it very fully. For,

1. *Christ is a high priest of good things to come*, by which may be understood, (1.) All the good things that were to come during the Old Testament, and now have come under the New. All the spiritual and eternal blessings the Old-Testament saints had in their day and under their dispensation were owing to the Messiah to come, on whom they believed. The Old Testament set forth in shadows what was to come; the New Testament is the accomplishment of the Old. (2.) All the good things yet to come and to be enjoyed in a gospel state, when the promises and prophecies made to the gospel church in the latter days shall be accomplished; all these depend upon Christ and his priesthood, and shall be fulfilled. (3.) Of all the good things to come in the heavenly state, which will perfect both the Testaments; as the state of glory will perfect the state of grace, this state will be in a much higher sense the perfection of the New Testament than the New Testament was the perfection of the Old. Observe, All things past, present, and to come, were, and are, founded upon, and flowing from, the priestly office of Christ.
2. Christ is a high priest *by a greater and more perfect tabernacle (v. 11), a tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building*, but his own body, or rather human nature, conceived by the Holy Ghost overshadowing the blessed virgin. This was a new fabric, a new order of building, infinitely superior to all earthly structures, not excepting the tabernacle of the temple itself.
3. Christ, our high priest, has entered into heaven, not as their high priest entered into the holiest, with the blood of bulls and of goats, but by his own blood, typified by theirs, and infinitely more precious. And this,
4. Not for one year only, which showed the imperfection of that priesthood, that it did but typically obtain a year's reprieve or pardon. But our high priest entered into heaven *once for all*, and has obtained not a yearly respite, but eternal redemption, and so needs not to make an annual entrance. In each of the types there was something that showed it was a type, and resembled the antitype, and something that showed it was but a type, and fell short of the antitype, and therefore ought by no means to be set up in competition with the antitype.
5. The Holy Ghost further signified and showed what was the efficacy of the blood of the Old-Testament sacrifices, and thence is inferred the much greater efficacy of the blood of Christ. (1.) The efficacy of the blood of the legal sacrifices extended to the purifying of the flesh (v. 13): it freed the outward man from ceremonial uncleanness and from temporal punishment, and entitled him to, and fitted him for, some external privileges. (2.) He infers very justly hence the far greater efficacy of the blood of Christ (v. 14): *How much more shall the blood of Christ*, etc. Here observe, [1.] What it was that gave such efficacy to the blood of Christ. *First*, It was his offering himself to God, the human nature upon the altar of his divine nature, he being priest, altar, and sacrifice, his divine nature serving for the two former, and his human nature for the last; now such a priest, altar, and sacrifice, could not but be propitiatory. *Secondly*, It was Christ's offering up himself to God through the eternal Spirit, not only as the divine nature supported the human, but the Holy Ghost, which he had without measure, helping him in all, and in this great act of obedience offering himself. *Thirdly*, It was Christ's offering himself to God without spot, without any sinful stain either in his nature or life; this was conformable to the law of sacrifices, which required them to be without blemish. Now further observe, [2.] What the efficacy of Christ's blood is; it is very great. For, *First*, It is sufficient to purge the conscience

from dead works, it reaches to the very soul and conscience, the defiled soul, defiled with sin, which is a dead work, proceeds from spiritual death, and tends to death eternal. As the touching of a dead body gave a legal uncleanness, so meddling with sin gives a moral and real defilement, fixes it in the very soul; but the blood of Christ has efficacy to purge it out. *Secondly*, It is sufficient to enable us to serve the living God, not only by purging away that guilt which separates between God and sinners, but by sanctifying and renewing the soul through the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, purchased by Christ for this purpose, that we might be enabled to serve the living God in a lively manner.

Verses 15-22

In these verses the apostle considers the gospel under the notion of a will or testament, the new or last will and testament of Christ, and shows the necessity and efficacy of the blood of Christ to make this testament valid and effectual.

I. The gospel is here considered as a testament, the new and last will and testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is observable that the solemn transactions that pass between God and man are sometimes called a covenant, here a testament. A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties about things that are in their own power, or may be so, and this either with or without a mediator; this agreement takes effect at such time and in such manner as therein declared. A testament is a voluntary act and deed of a single person, duly executed and witnessed, bestowing legacies on such legatees as are described and characterized by the testator, and which can only take effect upon his death. Now observe, Christ is the Mediator of a New Testament (v. 15); and he is so for several ends and purposes here mentioned. 1. To redeem persons from their transgressions committed against the law or first testament, which makes every transgression a forfeiture of liberty, and makes men debtors, and slaves or prisoners, who need to be redeemed. 2. To qualify all those that are effectually called to receive the promise of an eternal inheritance. These are the great legacies that Christ by his last will and testament has bequeathed to the truly characterized legatees.

II. To make this New Testament effectual, it was necessary that Christ should die; the legacies accrue by means of death. This he proves by two arguments:—1. From the general nature of every will or testamentary disposition, v. 16. Where a testament is, where it acts and operates, there must of necessity be the death of the testator; till then the property is still in the testator's hand, and he has power to revoke, cancel, or alter, his will as he pleases; so that no estate, no right, is conveyed by will, till the testator's death has made it unalterable and effectual. 2. From the particular method that was taken by Moses in the ratification of the first testament, which was not done without blood, v. 18, 19, etc. All men by sin had become guilty before God, had forfeited their inheritance, their liberties, and their very lives, into the hands of divine justice; but God, being willing to show the greatness of his mercy, proclaimed a covenant of grace, and ordered it to be typically administered under the Old Testament, but not without the blood and life of the creature; and God accepted the blood of bulls and goats, as typifying the blood of Christ; and by these means the covenant of grace was ratified under the former dispensation. The method taken by Moses, according to the direction he had received from God, is here particularly related (1.) Moses spoke every precept to all the people, according to the law, v. 19. He published to them the tenour of the covenant, the duties required, the rewards promised to those who did their duty, and the punishment threatened against the transgressors, and he called for their consent

to the terms of the covenant; and this in an express manner. (2.) Then he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and applied this blood by sprinkling it. This blood and water signified the blood and water that came out of our Saviour's pierced side, for justification and sanctification, and also shadowed forth the two sacraments of the New Testament, baptism and the Lord's supper, with scarlet wool, signifying the righteousness of Christ with which we must be clothed, the hyssop signifying that faith by which we must apply all. Now with these Moses sprinkled, [1.] The book of the law and covenant, to show that the covenant of grace is confirmed by the blood of Christ and made effectual to our good. [2.] The people, intimating that the shedding of the blood of Christ will be no advantage to us if it be not applied to us. And the sprinkling of both the book and the people signified the mutual consent of both parties, God and man, and their mutual engagements to each other in this covenant through Christ, Moses at the same time using these words, *This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.* This blood, typifying the blood of Christ, is the ratification of the covenant of grace to all true believers. [3.] He sprinkled the tabernacle and all the utensils of it, intimating that all the sacrifices offered up and services performed there were accepted only through the blood of Christ, which procures the remission of that iniquity that cleaves to our holy things, which could not have been remitted but by that atoning blood.

Verses 23-28

In this last part of the chapter, the apostle goes on to tell us what the Holy Ghost has signified to us by the legal purifications of the patterns of the things in heaven, inferring thence the necessity of better sacrifices to consecrate the heavenly things themselves.

I. The necessity of purifying the patterns of the things in heaven, v. 23. This necessity arises both from the divine appointment, which must always be obeyed, and from the reason of that appointment, which was to preserve a proper resemblance between the things typifying and the things typified. It is observable here that the sanctuary of God on earth is a pattern of heaven, and communion with God in his sanctuary is to his people a heaven upon earth.

II. The necessity that the heavenly things themselves should be purified with better sacrifices than of bulls and goats; the things themselves are better than the patterns, and must therefore be consecrated with better sacrifices. These heavenly things are the privileges of the gospel state, begun in grace, perfected in glory. These must be ratified by a suitable sanction or consecration; and this was the blood of Christ. Now it is very evident that the sacrifice of Christ is infinitely better than those of the law. 1. From the places in which the sacrifices under the law, and that under the gospel, were offered. Those under the law were the holy places made with hands, which are but figures of the true sanctuary, v. 24. Christ's sacrifice, though offered upon earth, was by himself carried up into heaven, and is there presented in a way of daily intercession; for he appears in the presence of God for us. He has gone to heaven, not only to enjoy the rest and receive the honour due to him, but to appear in the presence of God for us, to present our persons and our performances, to answer and rebuke our adversary and accuser, to secure our interest, to perfect all our affairs, and to prepare a place for us. 2. From the sacrifices themselves, v. 26. Those under the law were the lives and blood of other creatures of a different nature from the offerers—the blood of beasts, a thing of small value, and which would have been of none at all in this matter had it not had a typical respect to the blood of Christ; but the sacrifice

of Christ was the oblation of himself; he offered his own blood, truly called, by virtue of the hypostatical union, *the blood of God*; and therefore of infinite value. 3. From the frequent repetition of the legal sacrifices. This showed the imperfection of that law; but it is the honour and perfection of Christ's sacrifice that, being once offered, it was sufficient to all the ends of it; and indeed the contrary would have been absurd, for then he must have been still dying and rising again, and ascending and then again descending and dying; and the great work had been always *in fieri—always doing*, and always to do, but never finished, which would be as contrary to reason as it is to revelation, and to the dignity of his person: *But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself*. The gospel is the last dispensation of the grace of God to men. 4. From the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices, and the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice. The legal sacrifices could not of themselves put away sin, neither procure pardon for it now power against it. Sin would still have lain upon us, and had dominion over us; but Jesus Christ by one sacrifice has made an end of sin, he has destroyed the works of the devil.

III. The apostle illustrates the argument from the appointment of God concerning men (v. 27, 28), and observes something like it in the appointment of God concerning Christ.

1. The appointment of God concerning men contains in it two things:—(1.) That they must once die, or, at least, undergo a change equivalent to death. It is an awful thing to die, to have the vital knot loosed or cut asunder, all relations here dropped at once, an end put to our probation and preparation state, and to enter into another world. It is a great work, and it is a work that can be but once done, and therefore had need to be well done. This is matter of comfort to the godly, that they shall die well and die but once; but it is matter of terror to the wicked, who die in their sins, that they cannot return again to do that great work better. (2.) It is appointed to men that after death they shall come to judgment, to a particular judgment immediately after death; for the soul returns to God as to its judge, to be determined to its eternal state; and men shall be brought to the general judgment, at the end of the world. This is the unalterable decree of God concerning men—they must die, and they must be judged. It is appointed for them, and it is to be believed and seriously considered by them.

2. The appointment of God concerning Christ, bearing some resemblance to the other. (1.) He must be once offered, to bear the sins of many, of all the Father had given to him, of all who should believe in his name. He was not offered for any sin of his own; he was wounded for our transgressions. God laid on him the iniquity of all his people; and these are many, though not so many as the rest of mankind; yet, when they are all gathered to him, he will be the first-born among many brethren. (2.) It is appointed that Christ shall appear the second time without sin, to the salvation of those who look for him. [1.] He will then appear without sin; at his first appearance, though he had no sin of his own, yet he stood charged with the sins of many; he was the Lamb of God that bore upon him the sins of the world, and then he appeared in the form of sinful flesh; but his second appearance will be without any such charge upon him, he having fully discharged it before, and then his visage shall not be marred, but shall be exceedingly glorious. [2.] This will be to the salvation of all who look for him; he will then perfect their holiness, their happiness; their number shall then be accomplished, and their salvation completed. Observe, It is the distinguishing character of true believers that they are looking for Christ; they look to him by faith; they look for him by hope and holy desires. They look for him in every duty, in every ordinance, in every providence now; and they expect his second

coming, and are preparing for it; and though it will be sudden destruction to the rest of the world, who scoff at the report of it, it will be eternal salvation to those who look for it.

Chapter 10

The apostle knew very well that the Hebrews, to whom he wrote, were strangely fond of the Levitical dispensation, and therefore he fills his mouth with arguments to wean them from it; and in order thereto proceeds in this chapter, I. To lay low the whole of that priesthood and sacrifice (v. 1-6). II. He raises and exalts the priesthood of Christ very high, that he might effectually recommend him and his gospel to them (v. 7-18). III. He shows to believers the honours and dignities of their state, and calls them to suitable duties (v. 19 to the end).

Verses 1-6

Here the apostle, by the direction of the Spirit of God, sets himself to lay low the Levitical dispensation; for though it was of divine appointment, and very excellent and useful in its time and place, yet, when it was set up in competition with Christ, to whom it was only designed to lead the people, it was very proper and necessary to show the weakness and imperfection of it, which the apostle does effectually, from several arguments. As,

I. That the law had a shadow, and but a shadow, of good things to come; and who would dote upon a shadow, though of good things, especially when the substance has come? Observe, 1. The things of Christ and the gospel are good things; they are the best things; they are best in themselves, and the best for us: they are realities of an excellent nature. 2. These good things were, under the Old Testament, good things to come, not clearly discovered, nor fully enjoyed. 3. That the Jews then had but the shadow of the good things of Christ, some adumbrations of them; we under the gospel have the substance.

II. That the law was not the very image of the good things to come. An image is an exact draught of the thing represented thereby. The law did not go so far, but was only a shadow, as the image of a person in a looking-glass is a much more perfect representation than his shadow upon the wall. The law was a very rough draught of the great design of divine grace, and therefore not to be so much doted on.

III. The legal sacrifices, being offered year by year, could never make the comers thereunto perfect; for then there would have been an end of offering them, v. 1, 2. Could they have satisfied the demands of justice, and made reconciliation for iniquity,—could they have purified and pacified conscience,—then they had ceased, as being no further necessary, since the offerers would have had no more sin lying upon their consciences. But this was not the case; after one day of atonement was over, the sinner would fall again into one fault or another, and so there would be need of another day of atonement, and of one every year, besides the daily ministrations. Whereas now, under the gospel, the atonement is perfect, and not to be repeated; and the sinner, once pardoned, is ever pardoned as to his state, and only needs to renew his repentance and faith, that he may have a comfortable sense of a continued pardon.

IV. As the legal sacrifices did not of themselves take away sin, so it was impossible they should, v. 4. There was an essential defect in them. 1. They were not of the same nature with us who sinned. 2. They were not of sufficient value to make satisfaction for the affronts offered to the justice and government of God. They were not of the same nature that offended, and so could not be suitable. Much less were they of the same nature that was offended; and nothing less than the nature that was

offended could make the sacrifice a full satisfaction for the offence. 3. The beasts offered up under the law could not consent to put themselves in the sinner's room and place. The atoning sacrifice must be one capable of consenting, and must voluntarily substitute himself in the sinner's stead: Christ did so.

V. There was a time fixed and foretold by the great God, and that time had now come, when these legal sacrifices would be no longer accepted by him nor useful to men. God never did desire them for themselves, and now he abrogated them; and therefore to adhere to them now would be resisting God and rejecting him. This time of the repeal of the Levitical laws was foretold by David (Ps. 40:6, 7), and is recited here as now come. Thus industriously does the apostle lay low the Mosaical dispensation.

Verses 7-18

Here the apostle raises up and exalts the Lord Jesus Christ, as high as he had laid the Levitical priesthood low. He recommends Christ to them as the true high priest, the true atoning sacrifice, the antitype of all the rest: and this he illustrates,

I. From the purpose and promise of God concerning Christ, which are frequently recorded in the volume of the book of God, v. 7. God had not only decreed, but declared by Moses and the prophets, that Christ should come and be the great high priest of the church, and should offer up a perfect and a perfecting sacrifice. It was written of Christ, in the beginning of the book of God, that *the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head*; and the Old Testament abounds with prophecies concerning Christ. Now since he is the person so often promised, so much spoken of, so long expected by the people of God, he ought to be received with great honour and gratitude.

II. From what God had done in preparing a body for Christ (that is, a human nature), that he might be qualified to be our Redeemer and Advocate; uniting the two natures in his own person, he was a fit Mediator to go between God and man; a days-man to lay his hand upon both, a peace-maker, to reconcile them, and an everlasting band of union between God and the creature—"*My ears hast thou opened; thou has fully instructed me, furnished and fitted me for the work, and engaged me in it,*" Ps. 40:6. Now a Saviour thus provided, and prepared by God himself in so extraordinary a manner, ought to be received with great affection and gladness.

III. From the readiness and willingness that Christ discovered to engage in this work, when no other sacrifice would be accepted, v. 7-9. When no less sacrifice would be a proper satisfaction to the justice of God than that of Christ himself, then Christ voluntarily came into it: "*Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O God! Let thy curse fall upon me, but let these go their way. Father, I delight to fulfil thy counsels, and my covenant with thee for them; I delight to perform all thy promises, to fulfil all the prophecies.*" This should endear Christ and our Bibles to us, that in Christ we have the fulfilling of the scriptures.

IV. From the errand and design upon which Christ came; and this was to do the will of God, not only as a prophet to reveal the will of God, not only as a king to give forth divine laws, but as a priest to satisfy the demands of justice, and to fulfil all righteousness. Christ came to do the will of God in two instances. 1. In taking away the first priesthood, which God had no pleasure in; not only taking away the curse of the covenant of works, and canceling the sentence denounced against us as sinners, but taking away the insufficient typical priesthood, and blotting out the hand-writing of ceremonial ordinances and

nailing it to his cross. 2. In establishing the second, that is, his own priesthood and the everlasting gospel, the most pure and perfect dispensation of the covenant of grace; this is the great design upon which the heart of God was set from all eternity. The will of God centers and terminates in it; and it is not more agreeable to the will of God than it is advantageous to the souls of men; for it is by this will that *we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*, v. 10. Observe, (1.) What is the fountain of all that Christ has done for his people—the sovereign will and grace of God. (2.) How we come to partake of what Christ has done for us—by being sanctified, converted, effectually called, wherein we are united to Christ, and so partake of the benefits of his redemption; and this sanctification is owing to the oblation he made of himself to God. V. From the perfect efficacy of the priesthood of Christ (v. 14): *By one offering he hath for ever perfected those that are sanctified*; he has delivered and will perfectly deliver those that are brought over to him, from all the guilt, power, and punishment of sin, and will put them into the sure possession of perfect holiness and felicity. This is what the Levitical priesthood could never do; and, if we indeed are aiming at a perfect state, we must receive the Lord Jesus as the only high priest that can bring us to that state.

VI. From the place to which our Lord Jesus is now exalted, the honour he has there, and the further honour he shall have: *This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God, henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool*, v. 12, 13. Here observe, 1. To what honour Christ, as man and Mediator, is exalted—to the right hand of God, the seat of power, interest, and activity: the giving hand; all the favours that God bestows on his people are handed to them by Christ: the receiving hand; all the duties that God accepts from men are presented by Christ: the working hand; all that pertains to the kingdoms of providence and grace is administered by Christ; and therefore this is the highest post of honour. 2. How Christ came to this honour—not merely by the purpose or donation of the Father, but by his own merit and purchase, as a reward due to his sufferings; and, as he can never be deprived of an honour so much his due, so he will never quit it, nor cease to employ it for his people's good. 3. How he enjoys this honour—with the greatest satisfaction and rest; he is for ever sitting down there. The Father acquiesces and is satisfied in him; he is satisfied in his Father's will and presence; this is his rest for ever; here he will dwell, for he has both desired and deserved it. 4. He has further expectations, which shall not be disappointed; for they are grounded upon the promise of the Father, who hath said unto him, *Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*, Ps. 110:1. One would think such a person as Christ could have no enemies except in hell; but it is certain that he has enemies on earth, very many, and very inveterate ones. Let not Christians then wonder that they have enemies, though they desire to live peaceably with all men. But Christ's enemies shall be made his footstool; some by conversion, others by confusion; and, which way soever it be, Christ will be honoured. Of this Christ is assured, this he is expecting, and his people should rejoice in the expectation of it; for, when his enemies shall be subdued, their enemies, that are so for his sake, shall be subdued also.

VII. The apostle recommends Christ from the witness the Holy Ghost has given in the scriptures concerning him; this relates chiefly to what should be the happy fruit and consequence of his humiliation and sufferings, which in general is that new and gracious covenant that is founded upon his satisfaction, and sealed by his blood (v. 15): *Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness*.

The passage is cited from Jer. 31:31, in which covenant God promises, 1. That he will pour out his Spirit upon his people, so as to give them wisdom, will, and power, to obey his word; he will put his laws in their hearts, and write them in their minds, v. 16. This will make their duty plain, easy, and pleasant. 2. Their sins and iniquities he will remember no more (v. 17), which will alone show the riches of divine grace, and the sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction, that it needs not be repeated, v. 18. For there shall be no more remembrance of sin against true believers, either to shame them now or to condemn them hereafter. This was much more than the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices could effect.

And now we have gone through the doctrinal part of the epistle, in which we have met with many things dark and difficult to be understood, which we must impute to the weakness and dulness of our own minds. The apostle now proceeds to apply this great doctrine, so as to influence their affections, and direct their practice, setting before them the dignities and duties of the gospel state.

Verses 19-39

I. Here the apostle sets forth the dignities of the gospel state. It is fit that believers should know the honours and privileges that Christ has procured for them, that, while they take the comfort, they may give him the glory of all. The privileges are, 1. Boldness to enter into the holiest. They have access to God, light to direct them, liberty of spirit and of speech to conform to the direction; they have a right to the privilege and a readiness for it, assistance to use and improve it and assurance of acceptance and advantage. They may enter into the gracious presence of God in his holy oracles, ordinances, providences, and covenant, and so into communion with God, where they receive communications from him, till they are prepared to enter into his glorious presence in heaven. 2. A high priest over the house of God, even this blessed Jesus, who presides over the church militant, and every member thereof on earth, and over the church triumphant in heaven. God is willing to dwell with men on earth, and to have them dwell with him in heaven; but fallen man cannot dwell with God without a high priest, who is the Mediator of reconciliation here and of fruition hereafter.

II. The apostle tells us the way and means by which Christians enjoy such privileges, and, in general, declares it to be *by the blood of Jesus*, by the merit of that blood which he offered up to God as an atoning sacrifice: he has purchased for all who believe in him free access to God in the ordinances of his grace here and in the kingdom of his glory. This blood, being sprinkled on the conscience, chases away slavish fear, and gives the believer assurance both of his safety and his welcome into the divine presence. Now the apostle, having given this general account of the way by which we have access to God, enters further into the particulars of it, v. 20. As, 1. It is the only way; there is no way left but this. The first way to the tree of life is, and has been, long shut up. 2. It is a new way, both in opposition to the covenant of works and to the antiquated dispensation of the Old Testament; it is *via novissima*—*the last way* that will ever be opened to men. Those who will not enter in this way exclude themselves for ever. It is a way that will always be effectual. 3. It is a living way. It would be death to attempt to come to God in the way of the covenant of works; but this way we may come to God, and live. It is by a living Saviour, who, though he was dead, is alive; and it is a way that gives life and lively hope to those who enter into it. 4. It is a way that Christ has consecrated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh. The veil in the tabernacle and temple signified the body of Christ; when

he died, the veil of the temple was rent in sunder, and this was at the time of the evening sacrifice, and gave the people a surprising view into the holy of holies, which they never had before. Our way to heaven is by a crucified Saviour; his death is to us the way of life. To those who believe this he will be precious.

III. He proceeds to show the Hebrews the duties binding upon them on account of these privileges, which were conferred in such an extraordinary way, v. 22, 23, etc.

1. They must draw near to God, and that in a right manner. They must draw near to God. Since such a way of access and return to God is opened, it would be the greatest ingratitude and contempt of God and Christ still to keep at a distance from him. They must draw near by conversion, and by taking hold of his covenant. They must draw near in all holy conversation, like Enoch walking with God. They must draw near in humble adorations, worshipping at his footstool. They must draw near in holy dependence, and in a strict observance of the divine conduct towards them. They must draw near in conformity to God, and communion with him, living under his blessed influence, still endeavouring to get nearer and nearer, till they come to dwell in his presence; but they must see to it that they make their approach to God after a right manner. (1.) With a true heart, without any allowed guile or hypocrisy. God is the searcher of hearts, and he requires truth in the inward parts. Sincerity is our gospel perfection, though not our justifying righteousness. (2.) In full assurance of faith, with a faith grown up to a full persuasion that when we come to God by Christ we shall have audience and acceptance. We should lay aside all sinful distrust. Without faith it is impossible to please God; and the stronger our faith is the more glory we give to God. And, (3.) Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, by a believing application of the blood of Christ to our souls. They may be cleansed from guilt, from filth, from sinful fear and torment, from all aversion to God and duty, from ignorance, and error, and superstition, and whatever evils the consciences of men are subject to by reason of sin. (4.) Our bodies washed with pure water, that is, with the water of baptism (by which we are recorded among the disciples of Christ, members of his mystical body), or with the sanctifying virtue of the Holy Spirit, reforming and regulating our outward conversation as well as our inward frame, cleansing from the filthiness of the flesh as well as of the spirit. The priests under the law were to wash, before they went into the presence of the Lord to offer before him. There must be a due preparation for making our approaches to God.

2. The apostle exhorts believers to hold fast the profession of their faith, v. 23. Here observe, (1.) The duty itself—to hold fast the profession of our faith, to embrace all the truths and ways of the gospel, to get fast hold of them, and to keep that hold against all temptation and opposition. Our spiritual enemies will do what they can to wrest our faith, and hope, and holiness, and comfort, out of our hands, but we must hold fast our religion as our best treasure. (2.) The manner in which we must do this—without wavering, without doubting, without disputing, without dallying with temptation to apostasy. Having once settled these great things between God and our souls, we must be steadfast and immovable. Those who begin to waver in matters of Christian faith and practice are in danger of falling away. (3.) The motive or reason enforcing this duty: *He is faithful that hath promised*. God has made great and precious promises to believers, and he is a faithful God, true to his word; there is no falseness nor fickleness with him, and there should be none with us. His faithfulness should excite and encourage us to be faithful, and we must depend more upon his promises to us than upon our promises to him, and we must plead with him

the promise of grace sufficient.

IV. We have the means prescribed for preventing our apostasy, and promoting our fidelity and perseverance, v. 24, 25, etc. He mentions several; as, 1. That we should *consider one another, to provoke to love and to good works*. Christians ought to have a tender consideration and concern for one another; they should affectionately consider what their several wants, weaknesses, and temptations are; and they should do this, not to reproach one another, to provoke one another not to anger, but to love and good works, calling upon themselves and one another to love God and Christ more, to love duty and holiness more, to love their brethren in Christ more, and to do all the good offices of Christian affection both to the bodies and the souls of each other. A good example given to others is the best and most effectual provocation to love and good works. 2. *Not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together*, v. 25. It is the will of Christ that his disciples should assemble together, sometimes more privately for conference and prayer, and in public for hearing and joining in all the ordinances of gospel worship. There were in the apostles' times, and should be in every age, Christian assemblies for the worship of God, and for mutual edification. And it seems even in those times there were some who forsook these assemblies, and so began to apostatize from religion itself. The communion of saints is a great help and privilege, and a good means of steadiness and perseverance; hereby their hearts and hands are mutually strengthened. 3. To exhort one another, to exhort ourselves and each other, to warn ourselves and one another of the sin and danger of backsliding, to put ourselves and our fellow-christians in mind of our duty, of our failures and corruptions, to watch over one another, and be jealous of ourselves and one another with a godly jealousy. This, managed with a true gospel spirit, would be the best and most cordial friendship. 4. That we should observe the approaching of times of trial, and be thereby quickened to greater diligence: *So much the more, as you see the day approaching*. Christians ought to observe the signs of the times, such as God has foretold. There was a day approaching, a terrible day to the Jewish nation, when their city should be destroyed, and the body of the people rejected of God for rejecting Christ. This would be a day of dispersion and temptation to the chosen remnant. Now the apostle puts them upon observing what signs there were of the approach of such a terrible day, and upon being the more constant in meeting together and exhorting one another, that they might be the better prepared for such a day. There is a trying day coming on us all, the day of our death, and we should observe all the signs of its approaching, and improve them to greater watchfulness and diligence in duty.

V. Having mentioned these means of establishment, the apostle proceeds, in the close of the chapter, to enforce his exhortations to perseverance, and against apostasy, by many very weighty considerations, v. 26, 27, etc.

1. From the description he gives of the sin of apostasy. It is *sinning wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth*, sinning wilfully against that truth of which we have had convincing evidence. This text has been the occasion of great distress to some gracious souls; they have been ready to conclude that every wilful sin, after conviction and against knowledge, is the unpardonable sin: but this has been their infirmity and error. The sin here mentioned is a total and final apostasy, when men with a full and fixed will and resolution despise and reject Christ, the only Saviour,—despise and resist the Spirit, the only sanctifier,—and despise and renounce the gospel, the only way of salvation, and the words of eternal life; and all this after they have known, owned, and professed, the Christian religion, and continue to do so obstinately and maliciously. This is the great

transgression: the apostle seems to refer to the law concerning presumptuous sinners, Num. 15:30, 31. They were to be cut off.

2. From the dreadful doom of such apostates. (1.) There remains no more sacrifice for such sins, no other Christ to come to save such sinners; they sin against the last resort and remedy. There were some sins under the law for which no sacrifices were provided; but yet if those who committed them did truly repent, though they might not escape temporal death, they might escape eternal destruction; for Christ would come, and make atonement. But now those under the gospel who will not accept of Christ, that they may be saved by him, have no other refuge left them. (2.) There remains for them only a certain fearful looking for of judgment, v. 27. Some think this refers to the dreadful destruction of the Jewish church and state; but certainly it refers also to the utter destruction that awaits all obstinate apostates at death and judgment, when the Judge will discover a fiery indignation against them, which will devour the adversaries; they will be consigned to the devouring fire and to everlasting burnings. Of this destruction God gives some notorious sinners, while on earth, a fearful foreboding in their own consciences, a dreadful looking for it, with a despair of ever being able either to endure or escape it.

3. From the methods of divine justice with those who despised Moses's law, that is, sinned presumptuously, despising his authority, his threatenings and his power. These, when convicted by two or three witnesses, were put to death; they died without mercy, a temporal death. Observe, Wise governors should be careful to keep up the credit of their government and the authority of the laws, by punishing presumptuous offenders; but then in such cases there should be good evidence of the fact. Thus God ordained in Moses's law; and hence the apostle infers the heavy doom that will fall upon those that apostatize from Christ. Here he refers to their own consciences, to judge how much sorer punishment the despisers of Christ (after they have professed to know him) are likely to undergo; and they may judge of the greatness of the punishment by the greatness of the sin. (1.) They have *trodden under foot the Son of God*. To trample upon an ordinary person shows intolerable insolence; to treat a person of honour in that vile manner is insufferable; but to deal thus with the Son of God, who himself is God, must be the highest provocation—to trample upon his person, denying him to be the Messiah—to trample upon his authority, and undermine his kingdom—to trample upon his members as the offscouring of all things, and not fit to live in the world; what punishment can be too great for such men? (2.) They have *counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing*; that is, the blood of Christ, with which the covenant was purchased and sealed, and wherewith Christ himself was consecrated, or wherewith the apostate was sanctified, that is, baptized, visibly initiated into the new covenant by baptism, and admitted to the Lord's supper. Observe, There is a kind of sanctification which persons may partake of and yet fall away: they may be distinguished by common gifts and graces, by an outward profession, by a form of godliness, a course of duties, and a set of privileges, and yet fall away finally. Men who have seemed before to have the blood of Christ in high esteem may come to account it an unholy thing, no better than the blood of a malefactor, though it was the world's ransom, and every drop of it of infinite value. (3.) *Those have done despite unto the Spirit of grace*, the Spirit that is graciously given to men, and that works grace wherever it is,—the Spirit of grace, that should be regarded and attended to with the greatest care,—this Spirit they have grieved, resisted, quenched, yea, done despite to him, which is the highest act of wickedness, and makes the case of the sinner desperate, refusing to have the gospel salvation applied to him. Now he leaves it to the consciences of all, appeals to

universal reason and equity, whether such aggravated crimes ought not to receive a suitable punishment, a sorer punishment than those who had died without mercy? But what punishment can be sorer than to die without mercy? I answer, To die by mercy, by the mercy and grace which they have despised. How dreadful is the case when not only the justice of God, but his abused grace and mercy call for vengeance!

4. From the description we have in the scripture of the nature of God's vindictive justice, v. 30. We know that he has said, *Vengeance is mine*. This is taken out of Ps. 94:1, *Vengeance belongs unto me*. The terrors of the Lord are known both by revelation and reason. Vindictive justice is a glorious, though terrible attribute of God; it belongs to him, and he will use and execute it upon the heads of such sinners as despise his grace; he will avenge himself, and his Son, and Spirit, and covenant, upon apostates. And how dreadful then will their case be! The other quotation is from Deu. 32:36, *The Lord will judge his people*; he will search and try his visible church, and will discover and detect those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan; and he will separate the precious from the vile, and will punish the sinners in Zion with the greatest severity. Now those who know him who hath said, *Vengeance belongeth to me, I will recompense*, must needs conclude, as the apostle does (v. 31): *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. Those who know the joy that results from the favour of God can thereby judge of the power and dread of his vindictive wrath. Observe here, What will be the eternal misery of impenitent sinners and apostates: they shall fall into the hands of the living God; their punishment shall come from God's own hand. He takes them into the hand of his justice; he will deal with them himself; their greatest misery will be the immediate impressions of divine wrath on the soul. When he punishes them by creatures, the instrument abates something of the force of the blow; but, when he does it by his own hand, it is infinite misery. This they shall have at God's hand, they shall lie down in sorrow; their destruction shall come from his glorious powerful presence; when they make their woeful bed in hell, they will find that God is there, and his presence will be their greatest terror and torment. And he is a living God; he lives for ever, and will punish for ever.

5. He presses them to perseverance by putting them in mind of their former sufferings for Christ: *But call to mind the former days, in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions*, v. 32. In the early days of the gospel there was a very hot persecution raised up against the professors of the Christian religion, and the believing Hebrews had their share of it: he would have them to remember,

(1.) When they had suffered: *In former days, after they were illuminated*; that is, as soon as God had breathed life into their souls, and caused divine light to spring up in their minds, and taken them into his favour and covenant; then earth and hell combined all their force against them. Here observe, A natural state is a dark state, and those who continue in that state meet with no disturbance from Satan and the world; but a state of grace is a state of light, and therefore the powers of darkness will violently oppose it. Those who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.

(2.) What they suffered: they *endured a great fight of afflictions*, many and various afflictions united together against them, and they had a great conflict with them. Many are the troubles of the righteous. [1.] They were afflicted in themselves. In their own persons; they were made gazing-stocks, spectacles to the world, angels, and men, 1 Co. 4:9. In their names and

reputations (v. 33), by many reproaches. Christians ought to value their reputation; and they do so especially because the reputation of religion is concerned: this makes reproach a great affliction. They were afflicted in their estates, by the spoiling of their goods, by fines and forfeitures. [2.] They were afflicted in the afflictions of their brethren: *Partly while you became companions of those that were so used.* The Christian spirit is a sympathizing spirit, not a selfish spirit, but a compassionate spirit; it makes every Christian's suffering our own, puts us upon pitying others, visiting them, helping them, and pleading for them. Christians are one body, are animated by one spirit, have embarked in one common cause and interest, and are the children of that God who is afflicted in all the afflictions of his people. If one member of the body suffers, all the rest suffer with it. The apostle takes particular notice how they had sympathized with him (v. 34): *You had compassion on me in my bonds.* We must thankfully acknowledge the compassions our Christian friends have shown for us under our afflictions.

(3.) How they had suffered. They had been mightily supported under their former sufferings; they took their sufferings patiently, and not only so, but joyfully received it from God as a favour and honour conferred upon them that they should be thought worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Christ. God can strengthen his suffering people with all might in the inner man, to all patience and long-suffering, and that with joyfulness, Col. 1:11.

(4.) What it was that enabled them thus to bear up under their sufferings. They knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring substance. Observe, [1.] The happiness of the saints in heaven is substance, something of real weight and worth. All things here are but shadows. [2.] It is a better substance than any thing they can have or lose here. [3.] It is an enduring substance, it will out-live time and run parallel with eternity; they can never spend it; their enemies can never take it from them, as they did their earthly goods. [4.] This will make a rich amends for all they can lose and suffer here. In heaven they shall have a better life, a better estate, better liberty, better society, better hearts, better work, every thing better. [5.] Christians should know this in themselves, they should get the assurance of it in themselves (the Spirit of God witnessing with their spirits), for the assured knowledge of this will help them to endure any fight of afflictions they may be encountered with in this world.

6. He presses them to persevere, from that recompense of reward that waited for all faithful Christians (v. 35): *Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.* Here, (1.) He exhorts them not to cast away their confidence, that is, their holy courage and boldness, but to hold fast that profession for which they had suffered so much before, and borne those sufferings so well. (2.) He encourages them to this by assuring them that the reward of their holy confidence would be very great. It carries a present reward in it, in holy peace and joy, and much of God's presence and his power resting upon them; and it shall have a great recompense of reward hereafter. (3.) He shows them how necessary a grace the grace of patience is in our present state (v. 36): *You have need of patience, that after you have done the will of God you might receive the promise;* that is, this promised reward. Observe, The greatest part of the saints' happiness is in promise. They must first do the will of God before they receive the promise; and, after they have done the will of God, they have need of patience to wait for the time when the promise shall be fulfilled; they have need of patience to live till God calls them away. It is a trial of the patience of Christians, to be content to live after their work is done, and to stay for the reward till God's time to

give it them is come. We must be God's waiting servants when we can be no longer his working servants. Those who have had and exercised much patience already must have and exercise more till they die. (4.) To help their patience, he assures them of the near approach of Christ's coming to deliver and to reward them (v. 37): *For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*. He will soon come to them at death, and put an end to all their sufferings, and give them a crown of life. He will soon come to judgment, and put an end to the sufferings of the whole church (all his mystical body), and give them an ample and glorious reward in the most public manner. There is an appointed time for both, and beyond that time he will not tarry, Hab. 2:3. The Christian's present conflict may be sharp, but it will be soon over.

7. He presses them to perseverance, by telling them that this is their distinguishing character and will be their happiness; whereas apostasy is the reproach, and will be the ruin, of all who are guilty of it (v. 38, 39): *Now the just shall live by faith*, etc. (1.) It is the honourable character of just men that in times of the greatest affliction they can live by faith; they can live upon the assured persuasion they have of the truth of God's promises. Faith puts life and vigour into them. They can trust God, and live upon him, and wait his time: and, as their faith maintains their spiritual life now, it shall be crowned with eternal life hereafter. (2.) Apostasy is the mark and the brand of those in whom God takes no pleasure; and it is a cause of God's severe displeasure and anger. God never was pleased with the formal profession and external duties and services of such as do not persevere. He saw the hypocrisy of their hearts then; and he is greatly provoked when their formality in religion ends in an open apostasy from religion. He beholds them with great displeasure; they are an offence to him. (3.) The apostle concludes with declaring his good hope concerning himself and these Hebrews, that they should not forfeit the character and happiness of the just, and fall under the brand and misery of the wicked (v. 39): *But we are not*, etc.; as if he had said, "I hope we are not of those who draw back. I hope that you and I, who have met with great trials already, and have been supported under them by the grace of God strengthening our faith, shall not be at any time left to ourselves to draw back to perdition; but that God will still keep us by his mighty power through faith unto salvation." Observe, [1.] Professors may go a great way, and after all draw back; and this drawing back from God is drawing on to perdition: the further we depart from God the nearer we approach to ruin. [2.] Those who have been kept faithful in great trials for the time past have reason to hope that the same grace will be sufficient to help them still to live by faith, till they receive the end of their faith and patience, even the salvation of their souls. If we live by faith, and die in faith, our souls will be safe for ever.

Chapter 11

The apostle having, in the close of the foregoing chapter, recommended the grace of faith and a life of faith as the best preservative against apostasy, he now enlarges upon the nature and fruits of this excellent grace. I. The nature of it, and the honour it reflects upon all who live in the exercise of it (v. 1-3). II. The great examples we have in the Old Testament of those who lived by faith, and died and suffered extraordinary things by the strength of his grace (v. 4–38). And, III. The advantages that we have in the gospel for the exercise of this grace above what those had who lived in the times of the Old Testament (v. 39, 40).

Verses 1-3

Here we have, I. A definition or description of the grace of faith in two parts. 1. *It is the substance of things hoped for.* Faith and hope go together; and the same things that are the object of our hope are the object of our faith. It is a firm persuasion and expectation that God will perform all that he has promised to us in Christ; and this persuasion is so strong that it gives the soul a kind of possession and present fruition of those things, gives them a subsistence in the soul, by the first-fruits and foretastes of them: so that believers in the exercise of faith *are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* Christ dwells in the soul by faith, and the soul is filled with the fullness of God, as far as his present measure will admit; he experiences a substantial reality in the objects of faith. 2. *It is the evidence of things not seen.* Faith demonstrates to the eye of the mind the reality of those things that cannot be discerned by the eye of the body. Faith is the firm assent of the soul to the divine revelation and every part of it, and sets its seal that God is true. It is a full approbation of all that God has revealed as holy, just, and good; it helps the soul to make application of all to itself with suitable affections and endeavours; and so it is designed to serve the believer instead of sight, and to be to the soul all that the senses are to the body. That faith is but opinion or fancy which does not realize invisible things to the soul, and excite the soul to act agreeably to the nature and importance of them.

II. An account of the honour it reflects upon all those who have lived in the exercise of it (v. 2): *By it the elders obtained a good report*—the ancient believers, who lived in the first ages of the world. Observe, 1. True faith is an old grace, and has the best plea to antiquity: it is not a new invention, a modern fancy; it is a grace that has been planted in the soul of man ever since the covenant of grace was published in the world; and it has been practiced from the beginning of the revelation; the eldest and best men that ever were in the world were believers. 2. Their faith was their honour; it reflected honour upon them. They were an honour to their faith, and their faith was an honour to them. It put them upon doing *the things that were of good report*, and God has taken care that a record shall be kept and report made of the excellent things they did in the strength of this grace. The genuine actings of faith will bear to be reported, deserve to be reported, and will, when reported, redound to the honour of true believers.

III. We have here one of the first acts and articles of faith, which has a great influence on all the rest, and which is common to all believers in every age and part of the world, namely, the creation of the *worlds by the word of God*, not out of pre-existent matter, but out of nothing, v. 3. The grace of faith has a retrospect as well as prospect; it looks not only forward to the end of

the world, but back to the beginning of the world. By faith we understand much more of the formation of the world than ever could be understood by the naked eye of natural reason. Faith is not a force upon the understanding, but a friend and a help to it. Now what does faith give us to understand concerning *the worlds*, that is, the upper, middle, and lower regions of the universe? 1. *That these worlds were* not eternal, nor did they produce themselves, but they were made by another. 2. That the maker of the worlds is god; he is the maker of all things; and whoever is so must be God. 3. That he made the world with great exactness; it was a *framed* work, in every thing duly adapted and disposed to answer its end, and to express the perfections of the Creator. 4. That God made the world by his word, that is, by his essential wisdom and eternal Son, and by his active will, saying, *Let it be done, and it was done*, Ps. 33:9. 5. That the world was thus framed out of nothing, out of no pre-existent matter, contrary to the received maxim, that "out of nothing nothing can be made," which, though true of created power, can have no place with God, who can call *things that are not as if they were*, and command them into being. These things we understand by faith. The Bible gives us the truest and most exact account of the origin of all things, and we are to believe it, and not to wrest or run down the scripture-account of the creation, because it does not suit with some fantastic hypotheses of our own, which has been in some learned but conceited men the first remarkable step towards infidelity, and has led them into many more.

Verses 4-31

The apostle, having given us a more general account of the grace of faith, now proceeds to set before us some illustrious examples of it in the Old-Testament times, and these may be divided into two classes:—1. Those whose names are mentioned, and the particular exercise and actings of whose faith are specified. 2. Those whose names are barely mentioned, and an account given in general of the exploits of their faith, which it is left to the reader to accommodate, and apply to the particular persons from what he gathers up in the sacred story. We have here those whose names are not only mentioned, but the particular trials and actings of their faith are subjoined.

I. The leading instance and example of faith here recorded is that of Abel. It is observable that the Spirit of God has not thought fit to say any thing here of the faith of our first parents; and yet the church of God has generally, by a pious charity, taken it for granted that God gave them repentance and faith in the promised seed, that he instructed them in the mystery of sacrificing, that they instructed their children in it, and that they found mercy with God, after they had ruined themselves and all their posterity. But God has left the matter still under some doubt, as a warning to all who have great talents given to them, and a great trust reposed in them, that they do not prove unfaithful, since God would not enroll our first parents among the number of believers in this blessed calendar. It begins with Abel, one of the first saints, and the first martyr for religion, of all the sons of Adam, one who lived by faith, and died for it, and therefore a fit pattern for the Hebrews to imitate. Observe, 1. What Abel did by faith: *He offered up a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain*, a more full and perfect sacrifice, *pleiona thysian*. Hence learn, (1.) That, after the fall, God opened a new way for the children of men to return to him in religious worship. This is one of the first instances that is upon record of fallen men going in to worship God; and it was a wonder of mercy that all intercourse between God and man was not cut off by the fall. (2.) After the fall, God must be worshipped by

sacrifices, a way of worship which carries in it a confession of sin, and of the desert of sin, and a profession of faith in a Redeemer, who was to be a ransom for the souls of men. (3.) That, from the beginning, there has been a remarkable difference between the worshippers. Here were two persons, brethren, both of whom went in to worship God, and yet there was a vast difference. Cain was the elder brother, but Abel has the preference. It is not seniority of birth, but grace, that makes men truly honourable. The difference is observable in their persons: Abel was an upright person, a righteous man, a true believer; Cain was a formalist, had not a principle of special grace. It is observable in their principles: Abel acted under the power of faith; Cain only from the force of education, or natural conscience. There was also a very observable difference in their offerings: Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, *brought of the firstlings of the flock*, acknowledging himself to be a sinner who deserved to die, and only hoping for mercy through *the great sacrifice*; Cain brought only a sacrifice of acknowledgment, a mere thank-offering, *the fruit of the ground*, which might, and perhaps must, have been offered in innocency; here was no confession of sin, no regard to the ransom; this was an essential defect in Cain's offering. There will always be a difference between those who worship the true God; some will compass him about with lies, others will be faithful with the saints; some, like the Pharisee, will lean to their own righteousness; others, like the publican, will confess their sin, and cast themselves upon the mercy of God in Christ.

2. What Abel gained by his faith: the original record is in Gen. 4:4, *God had respect to Abel, and to his offering*; first to his person as gracious, then to his offering as proceeding from grace, especially from the grace of faith. In this place we are told that he obtained by his faith some special advantages; as, (1.) *Witness that he was righteous*, a justified, sanctified, and accepted person; this, very probably, was attested by fire from heaven, kindling and consuming his sacrifice. (2.) God gave witness to the righteousness of his person, by testifying his acceptance of his gifts. When the fire, an emblem of God's justice, consumed the offering, it was a sign that the mercy of God accepted the offerer for the sake of the great sacrifice. (3.) *By it he, being dead, yet speaketh*. He had the honour to leave behind him an instructive speaking case; and what does it speak to us? What should we learn from it? [1.] That fallen man has leave to go in to worship God, with hope of acceptance. [2.] That, if our persons and offerings be accepted, it must be through faith in the Messiah. [3.] That acceptance with God is a peculiar and distinguishing favour. [4.] That those who obtain this favour from God must expect the envy and malice of the world. [5.] That God will not suffer the injuries done to his people to remain unpunished, nor their sufferings unrewarded. These are very good and useful instructions, and yet *the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel*. [6.] That God would not suffer Abel's faith to die with him, but would raise up others, who should obtain like precious faith; and so he did in a little time; for in the next verse we read,

II. Of the faith of Enoch, v. 5. He is the second of those elders that through faith have a good report. Observe,

1. What is here reported of him. In this place (and in Gen. 5:22, etc.) we read, (1.) *That he walked with God*, that is, that he was really, eminently, actively, progressively, and perseveringly religious in his conformity to God, communion with God, and complacency in God. (2.) *That he was translated, that he should not see death*, nor any part of him be found upon earth; for God took him, soul and body, into heaven, as he will do those of the saints who shall be found alive at his second coming. (3.)

That before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. He had the evidence of it in his own conscience, and the Spirit of God witnessed with his spirit. Those who by faith walk with God in a sinful world are pleasing to him, and he will give them marks of his favour, and put honour upon them.

2. What is here said of his faith, v. 6. It is said that *without this faith it is impossible to please God*, without such a faith as helps us to walk with God, an active faith, and that we cannot come to God unless we *believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him*. (1.) He must believe that God is, and that he is what he is, what he has revealed himself to be in the scripture, a Being of infinite perfections, subsisting in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Observe, The practical belief of the existence of God, as revealed in the word, would be a powerful awe—band upon our souls, a bridle of restraint to keep us from sin, and a spur of constraint to put us upon all manner of gospel obedience. (2.) *That he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him*. Here observe, [1.] By the fall we have lost God; we have lost the divine light, life, love, likeness, and communion. [2.] God is again to be found of us through Christ, the second Adam. [3.] God has prescribed means and ways wherein he may be found; to wit, a strict attention to his oracles, attendance on his ordinances, and ministers duly discharging their office and associating with his people, observing his providential guidance, and in all things humbly waiting his gracious presence. [4.] Those who would find God in these ways of his must *seek him diligently*; they must seek early, earnestly, and perseveringly. *Then shall they seek him, and find him, if they seek him with all their heart*; and when once they have found him, as their reconciled God, they will never repent the pains they have spent in seeking after him.

III. The faith of Noah, v. 7. Observe,

1. The ground of Noah's faith—a warning he had received from God of things as yet not seen. He had a divine revelation, whether by voice or vision does not appear; but it was such as carried in it its own evidence; he was *forewarned of things not seen as yet*, that is, of a great and severe judgment, such as the world had never yet seen, and of which, in the course of second causes, there was not yet the least sign. This secret warning he was to communicate to the world, who would be sure to despise both him and his message. God usually warns sinners before he strikes; and, where his warnings are slighted, the blow will fall the heavier.

2. The actings of Noah's faith, and the influence it had both upon his mind and practice. (1.) Upon his mind; it impressed his soul with a fear of God's judgment: he was *moved with fear*. Faith first influences our affections, then our actions; and faith works upon those affections that are suitable to the matter revealed. If it be some good thing, faith stirs up love and desire; if some evil thing, faith stirs up fear. (2.) His faith influenced his practice. His fear, thus excited by believing God's threatening, moved him to prepare an ark, in which, no doubt, he met with the scorns and reproaches of a wicked generation. He did not dispute with God why he should make an ark, nor how it could be capable of containing what was to be lodged in it, nor how such a vessel could possibly weather out so great a storm. His faith silenced all objections, and set him to work in earnest.

3. The blessed fruits and rewards of Noah's faith. (1.) Hereby himself and his house were saved, when a whole world of sinners were perishing about them. God saved his family for his sake; it was well for them that they were Noah's sons and daughters; it was well for those women that they married into Noah's family; perhaps they might have married to great estates in other

families, but then they would have been drowned. We often say, "It is good to be akin to an estate;" but surely it is good to be akin to the covenant. (2.) Hereby he judged and condemned the world; his holy fear condemned their security and vain confidence; his faith condemned their unbelief; his obedience condemned their contempt and rebellion. Good examples will either convert sinners or condemn them. There is something very convincing in a life of strict holiness and regard to God; it commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and they are judged by it. This is the best way the people of God can take to condemn the wicked; not by harsh and censorious language, but by a holy exemplary conversation. (3.)

Hereby *he became an heir of the righteousness which is by faith*. [1.] He was possessed of a true justifying righteousness; he was *heir to it*: and, [2.] This his right of inheritance was through faith in Christ, as *a member of Christ, a child of God*, and, if a child, then an heir. His righteousness was relative, resulting from his adoption, through faith in the promised seed. As ever we expect to be justified and saved *in the great and terrible day of the Lord*, let us now prepare an ark, secure an interest in Christ, and in the ark of the covenant, and do it speedily, before the door be shut, for there is not salvation in any other.

IV. The faith of Abraham, the friend of God, and father of the faithful, in whom the Hebrews boasted, and from whom they derived their pedigree and privileges; and therefore the apostle, that he might both please and profit them, enlarges more upon the heroic achievements of Abraham's faith than of that of any other of the patriarchs; and in the midst of his account of the faith of Abraham he inserts the story of Sarah's faith, whose daughters those women are that continue to do well. Observe,

1. The ground of Abraham's faith, the call and promise of God, v. 8. (1.) This call, though it was a very trying call, was the call of God, and therefore a sufficient ground for faith and rule of obedience. The manner in which he was called Stephen relates in Acts 7:2, 3, *The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia—And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I will show thee*. This was an effectual call, by which he was converted from the idolatry of his father's house, Gen. 12:1. This call was renewed after his father's death in Charran.

Observe, [1.] The grace of God is absolutely free, in taking some of the worst of men, and making them the best. [2.] God must come to us before we come to him. [3.] In calling and converting sinners, God appears as a God of glory, and works a glorious work in the soul. [4.] This calls us not only to leave sin, but sinful company, and whatever is inconsistent with our devotedness to him. [5.] We need to be called, not only to set out well, but to go on well. [6.] He will not have his people take up that rest any where short of the heavenly Canaan. (2.) The promise of God. God promised Abraham that the place he was called to he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, after awhile he should have the heavenly Canaan for his inheritance, and in process of time his posterity should inherit the earthly Canaan. Observe here, [1.] God calls his people to an inheritance: by his effectual call he makes them children, and so heirs. [2.] This inheritance is not immediately possessed by them; they must wait some time for it: but the promise is sure, and shall have its seasonable accomplishment. [3.] The faith of parents often procures blessings for their posterity.

2. The exercise of Abraham's faith: he yielded an implicit regard to the call of God. (1.) *He went out, not knowing whither he went*. He put himself into the hand of God, to send him whithersoever he pleased. He subscribed to God's wisdom, as fittest to direct; and submitted to his will, as fittest to determine every thing that concerned him. Implicit faith and obedience are due to

God, and to him only. All that are effectually called resign up their own will and wisdom to the will and wisdom of God, and it is their wisdom to do so; though they know not always their way, yet they know their guide, and this satisfies them. (2.) *He sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country.* This was an exercise of his faith. Observe, [1.] How Canaan is called the land of promise, because yet only promised, not possessed. [2.] How Abraham lived in Canaan, not as heir and proprietor, but as a sojourner only. He did not serve an ejection, or raise a war against the old inhabitants, to dispossess them, but contented himself to live as a stranger, to bear their unkindnesses patiently, to receive any favours from them thankfully, and to keep his heart fixed upon his home, the heavenly Canaan. [3.] He dwelt in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. He lived there in an ambulatory moving condition, living in a daily readiness for his removal: and thus should we all live in this world. He had good company with him, and they were a great comfort to him in his sojourning state. Abraham lived till Isaac was seventy-five years old, and Jacob fifteen. Isaac and Jacob were heirs of the same promise; for the promise was renewed to Isaac (Gen. 26:3), and to Jacob, Gen. 28:13. All the saints are heirs of the same promise. The promise is made to believers and their children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call. And it is pleasant to see parents and children sojourning together in this world as heirs of the heavenly inheritance.

3. The supports of Abraham's faith (v. 10): *He looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

Observe here, (1.) The description given of heaven: it is a city, a regular society, well established, well defended, and well supplied: it is a city that hath foundations, even the immutable purposes and almighty power of God, the infinite merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the promises of an everlasting covenant, its own purity, and the perfection of its inhabitants: and it is a city whose builder and maker is God. He contrived the model; he accordingly made it, and he has laid open a new and living way into it, and prepared it for his people; he puts them into possession of it, prefers them in it, and is himself the substance and felicity of it. (2.) Observe the due regard that Abraham had to this heavenly city: he looked for it; he believed there was such a state; he waited for it, and in the mean time he conversed in it by faith; he had exalted and rejoicing hopes, that in God's time and way he should be brought safely to it. (3.) The influence this had upon his present conversation: it was a support to him under all the trials of his sojourning state, helped him patiently to bear all the inconveniences of it, and actively to discharge all the duties of it, persevering therein unto the end.

V. In the midst of the story of Abraham, the apostle inserts an account of the faith of Sarah. Here observe,

1. The difficulties of Sarah's faith, which were very great. As, (1.) The prevalency of unbelief for a time: she laughed at the promise, as impossible to be made good. (2.) She had gone out of the way of her duty through unbelief, in putting Abraham upon taking Hagar to his bed, that he might have a posterity. Now this sin of hers would make it more difficult for her to act by faith afterwards. (3.) The great improbability of the thing promised, that she should be the mother of a child, when she was of sterile constitution naturally, and now past the prolific age.

2. The actings of her faith. Her unbelief is pardoned and forgotten, but her faith prevailed and is recorded: *She judged him faithful, who had promised*, v. 11. She received the promise as the promise of God; and, being convinced of that, she truly judged he both could and would perform it, how impossible soever it might seem to reason; for the faithfulness of God will not

suffer him to deceive his people.

3. The fruits and rewards of her faith. (1.) *She received strength to conceive seed.* The strength of nature, as well as grace, is from God: he can make the barren soul fruitful, as well as the barren womb. (2.) *She was delivered of a child,* a man-child, a child of the promise, and comfort of his parents' advanced years, and the hope of future ages. (3.) From them, by this son, sprang a numerous progeny of illustrious persons, *as the stars of the sky* (v. 12)—a great, powerful, and renowned nation, above all the rest in the world; and a nation of saints, the peculiar church and people of God; and, which was the highest honour and reward of all, *of these, according to the flesh, the Messiah came, who is over all, God blessed for evermore.*

VI. The apostle proceeds to make mention of the faith of the other patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, and the rest of this happy family, v. 13. Here observe,

1. The trial of their faith in the imperfection of their present state. They had not received the promises, that is, they had not received the things promised, they had not yet been put into possession of Canaan, they had not yet seen their numerous issue, they had not seen Christ in the flesh. Observe, (1.) Many that are interested in the promises do not presently receive the things promised. (2.) One imperfection of the present state of the saints on earth is that their happiness lies more in promise and reversion than in actual enjoyment and possession. The gospel state is more perfect than the patriarchal, because more of the promises are now fulfilled. The heavenly state will be most perfect of all; for there all the promises will have their full accomplishment.

2. The actings of their faith during this imperfect state of things. Though they had not received the promises, yet,

(1.) They saw them afar off. Faith has a clear and a strong eye, and can see promised mercies at a great distance. Abraham saw Christ's day, when it was afar off, and rejoiced, Jn. 8:56.

(2.) They were persuaded of them, that they were true and should be fulfilled. Faith sets to its seal that God is true, and thereby settles and satisfies the soul.

(3.) They embraced them. Their faith was a faith of consent. Faith has a long arm, and can lay hold of blessings at a great distance, can make them present, can love them, and rejoice in them; and thus antedate the enjoyment of them.

(4.) They *confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth.* Observe, [1.] Their condition: *Strangers and pilgrims.* They are strangers as saints, whose home is heaven; they are pilgrims as they are travelling towards their home, though often meanly and slowly. [2.] Their acknowledgment of this their condition: they were not ashamed to own it; both their lips and their lives confessed their present condition. They expected little from the world. They cared not to engage much in it. They endeavoured to lay aside every weight, to gird up the loins of their minds to mind their way, to keep company and pace with their fellow-travellers, looking for difficulties, and bearing them, and longing to get home.

(5.) Hereby they declared plainly that they sought another country (v. 14), heaven, their own country. For their spiritual birth is thence, there are their best relations, and there is their inheritance. This country they seek: their designs are for it; their desires are after it; their discourse is about it; they diligently endeavour to clear up their title to it, to have their temper suited to it, to have their conversation in it, and to come to the enjoyment of it.

(6.) They gave full proof of their sincerity in making such a confession. For, [1.] They were not mindful of that country whence they came, v. 15. They did not hanker after the plenty and pleasures of it, nor regret and repent that they had left it; they had no desire to return to it. Note, Those that are once effectually and savingly called out of a sinful state have no mind to return into it again; they now know better things. [2.] They did not take the opportunity that offered itself for their return. They might have had such an opportunity. They had time enough to return. They had natural strength to return. They knew the way. Those with whom they sojourned would have been willing enough to part with them. Their old friends would have been glad to receive them. They had sufficient to bear the charges of their journey; and flesh and blood, a corrupt counsellor, would be sometimes suggesting to them a return. But they stedfastly adhered to God and duty under all discouragements and against all temptations to revolt from him. So should we all do. We shall not want opportunities to revolt from God; but we must show the truth of our faith and profession by a steady adherence to him to the end of our days. Their sincerity appeared not only in not returning to their former country, but in desiring a better country, that is, a heavenly. Observe, *First*, The heavenly country is better than any upon earth; it is better situated, better stored with every thing that is good, better secured from every thing that is evil; the employments, the enjoyments, the society, and every thing in it, are better than the best in this world. *Secondly*, All true believers desire this better country. True faith draws forth sincere and fervent desires; and the stronger faith is the more fervent those desires will be.

(7.) They died in the faith of those promises; not only lived by the faith of them, but died in the full persuasion that all the promises would be fulfilled to them and theirs, v. 13. That faith held out to the last. By faith, when they were dying, they received the atonement; they acquiesced in the will of God; they quenched all the fiery darts of the devil; they overcame the terrors of death, disarmed it of its sting, and bade a cheerful farewell to this world and to all the comforts and crosses of it. These were the actings of their faith. Now observe,

3. The gracious and great reward of their faith: *God is not ashamed to be their God, for he hath prepared for them a city*, v. 16. Note, (1.) God is the God of all true believers; faith gives them an interest in God, and in all his fullness. (2.) He is called their God. He calls himself so: *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*; he gives them leave to call him so; and he gives them the spirit of adoption, to enable them to cry, *Abba, Father*. (3.) Notwithstanding their meanness by nature, their vileness by sin, and the poverty of their outward condition, God is not ashamed to be called *their God*: such is his condescension, such is his love to them; therefore let them never be ashamed of being called his people, nor of any of those that are truly so, how much soever despised in the world. Above all, let them take care that they be not a shame and reproach to their God, and so provoke him to be ashamed of them; but let them act so as to be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory. (4.) As the proof of this, God has prepared for them a city, a happiness suitable to the relation into which he has taken them. For there is nothing in this world commensurate to the love of God in being the God of his people; and, if God neither could nor would give his people anything better than this world affords, he would be ashamed to be called their God. If he takes them into such a relation to himself, he will provide for them accordingly. If he takes them into such a relation to himself, he will provide for them accordingly. If he takes to himself the title of their God, he will fully answer it, and act up to it; and he

has prepared that for them in heaven which will fully answer this character and relation, so that it shall never be said, to the reproach and dishonour of God, that he has adopted a people to be his own children and then taken no care to make a suitable provision for them. The consideration of this should inflame the affections, enlarge the desires, and excite the diligent endeavours, of the people of God after this city that he has prepared for them.

VII. Now after the apostle has given this account of the faith of others, with Abraham, he returns to him again, and gives us an instance of the greatest trial and act of faith that stands upon record, either in the story of the father of the faithful or of any of his spiritual seed; and this was his offering up Isaac: *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son*, v. 17. In this great example observe,

1. The trial and exercise of Abraham's faith; he was tried indeed. It is said (Gen. 22:1), *God in this tempted Abraham*; not to sin, for so God tempteth no man, but only tried his faith and obedience to purpose. God had before this tempted or tried the faith of Abraham, when he called him away from his country and father's house,—when by a famine he was forced out of Canaan into Egypt,—when he was obliged to fight with five kings to rescue Lot,—when Sarah was taken from him by Abimelech, and in many other instances. But this trial was greater than all; he was commanded to offer up his son Isaac. Read the account of it, Gen. 22:2. There you will find every word was a trial: *"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. Take thy son, not one of thy beasts or slaves, thy only son by Sarah, Isaac thy laughter, the child of thy joy and delight, whom thou lovest as thine own soul; take him away to a distant place, three days' journey, the land of Moriah; do not only leave him there, but offer him for a burnt offering."* A greater trial was never put upon any creature. The apostle here mentions some things that very much added to the greatness of this trial. (1.) He was put upon it after he had received the promises, that this Isaac should build up his family, that in him his seed should be called (v. 18), and that he should be one of the progenitors of the Messiah, and all nations blessed in him; so that, in being called to offer up his Isaac, he seemed to be called to destroy and cut off his own family, to cancel the promises of God, to prevent the coming of Christ, to destroy the whole world, to sacrifice his own soul and his hopes of salvation, and to cut off the church of God at one blow: a most terrible trial! (2.) That this Isaac was his only-begotten son by his wife Sarah, the only one he was to have by her, and the only one that was to be the child and heir of the promise. Ishmael was to be put off with earthly greatness. The promise of a posterity, and of the Messiah, must either be fulfilled by means of this son or not at all; so that, besides his most tender affection to this his son, all his expectations were bound up in him, and, if he perished, must perish with him. If Abraham had ever so many sons, this was the only son who could convey to all nations the promised blessing. A son for whom he waited so long, whom he received in so extraordinary a manner, upon whom his heart was set—to have this son offered up as a sacrifice, and that by his own hand; it was a trial that would have upset the firmest and the strongest mind that ever informed a human body.

2. The actings of Abraham's faith in so great a trial: he obeyed; he offered up Isaac; he intentionally gave him up by his submissive soul to God, and was ready to have done it actually, according to the command of God; he went as far in it as to the very critical moment, and would have gone through with it if God had not prevented him. Nothing could be more tender and

moving than those words of Isaac: *My father, here is the wood, here is the fire; but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?* little thinking that he was to be the lamb; but Abraham knew it, and yet he went on with the great design.

3. The supports of his faith. they must be very great, suitable to the greatness of the trial: *He accounted that God was able to raise him from the dead*, v. 19. His faith was supported by the sense he had of the mighty power of God, who was able to raise the dead; he reasoned thus with himself, and so he resolved all his doubts. It does not appear that he had any expectation of being countermanded, and prevented from offering up his son; such an expectation would have spoiled the trial, and consequently the triumph, of his faith; but he knew that God was able to raise him from the dead, and he believed that God would do so, since such great things depended upon his son, which must have failed if Isaac had not a further life. Observe, (1.) God is able to raise the dead, to raise dead bodies, and to raise dead souls. (2.) The belief of this will carry us through the greatest difficulties and trials that we can meet with. (3.) It is our duty to be reasoning down our doubts and fears, by the consideration of the almighty power of God.

4. The reward of his faith in this great trial (v. 19): he received his son from the dead in a figure, in a parable. (1.) He received his son. He had parted with him to God, and God gave him back again. The best way to enjoy our comforts with comfort is to resign them up to God; he will then return them, if not in kind, yet in kindness. (2.) He received him from the dead, for he gave him up for dead; he was as a dead child to him, and the return was to him no less than a resurrection. (3.) This was a figure or parable of something further. It was a figure of the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, of whom Isaac was a type. It was a figure and earnest of the glorious resurrection of all true believers, whose life is not lost, but hid with Christ in God. We come now to the faith of other Old-Testament saints, mentioned by name, and by the particular trials and actings of their faith.

VIII. Of the faith of Isaac, v. 20. Something of him we had before interwoven with the story of Abraham; here we have something of a distinct nature—that by faith he blessed his two sons, Jacob and Esau, *concerning things to come*. Here observe,

1. The actings of his faith: He *blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come*. He blessed them; that is, he resigned them up to God in covenant; he recommended God and religion to them; he prayed for them, and prophesied concerning them, what would be the condition, and the condition of their descendants: we have the account of this in Gen. 27. Observe, (1.) Both Jacob and Esau were blessed as Isaac's children, at least as to temporal good things. It is a great privilege to be the offspring of good parents, and often the wicked children of good parents fare the better in this world for their parents' sake, for things present are in the covenant; but they are not the best things, and no man knoweth love or hatred by having or wanting such things. (2.) Jacob had the precedency and the principal blessing, which shows that it is grace and the new birth that exalt persons above their fellows and qualify them for the best blessings, and that it is owing to the sovereign free grace of God that in the same family one is taken and another left, one loved and the other hated, since all the race of Adam are by nature hateful to God—that if one has his portion in this world, and the other in the better world, it is God who makes the difference; for even the comforts of this life are more and better than any of the children of men deserve.

2. The difficulties Isaac's faith struggled with. (1.) He seemed to have forgotten how God had determined the matter at the birth

of these his sons, Gen. 25:23. This should have been a rule to him all along, but he was rather swayed by natural affection, and by general custom, which gives the double portion of honour, affection, and advantage, to the first-born. (2.) He acted in this matter with some reluctance. When he came to pronounce the blessing, *he trembled very exceedingly* (Gen. 27:33); and he charged Jacob that he had subtly taken away Esau's blessing, v. 33, 35. But, notwithstanding all this, Isaac's faith recovered itself, and he ratified the blessing: *I have blessed him yea, and he shall be blessed*. Rebecca and Jacob are not to be justified in the indirect means they used to obtain this blessing, but God will be justified in overruling even the sins of men to serve the purposes of his glory. Now, the faith of Isaac thus prevailing over his unbelief, it has pleased the God of Isaac to pass by the weakness of his faith, to commend the sincerity of it, and record him among the elders, *who through faith have obtained a good report*. We now go on to,

IX. The faith of Jacob (v. 21), who, *when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff*. There were a great many instances of the faith of Jacob; his life was a life of faith, and his faith met with great exercise. But it has pleased God to single two instances out of many of the faith of this patriarch, besides what has been already mentioned in the account of Abraham. Here observe,

1. The actings of his faith here mentioned, and they are two:—

(1.) *He blessed both the sons of Joseph*, Ephraim and Manasseh; he adopted them into the number of his own sons, and so into the congregation of Israel, though they were born in Egypt. It is doubtless a great blessing to be joined to the visible church of God in profession and privilege, but more to be so in spirit and truth. [1.] He made them both heads of different tribes, as if they had been his own immediate sons. [2.] He prayed for them, that they might both be blessed of God. [3.] He prophesied that they should be blessed; but, as Isaac did before, so now Jacob prefers the younger, Ephraim; and though Joseph had placed them so, that the right hand of his father should be laid on Manasseh, the elder, Jacob wittingly laid it on Ephraim, and this by divine direction, for he could not see, to show that the Gentile church, the younger, should have a more abundant blessing than the Jewish church, the elder.

(2.) *He worshipped, leaning on his staff*; that is, he praised God for what he had done for him, and for the prospect he had of approaching blessedness; and he prayed for those he was leaving behind him, that religion might live in his family when he was gone. He did this *leaning on the top of his staff*; not as the papists dream, that he worshipped some image of God engraven on the head of his staff, but intimating to us his great natural weakness, that he was not able to support himself so far as to sit up in his bed without a staff, and yet that he would not make this an excuse for neglecting the worshipping of God; he would do it as well as he could with his body, as well as with his spirit, though he could not do it as well as he would. He showed thereby his dependence upon God, and testified his condition here as a pilgrim with his staff, and his weariness of the world, and willingness to be at rest.

2. The time and season when Jacob thus acted his faith: when he was dying. He lived by faith, and he died by faith and in faith. Observe, Though the grace of faith is of universal use throughout our whole lives, yet it is especially so when we come to die. Faith has its greatest work to do at last, to help believers to finish well, to die to the Lord, so as to honour him, by patience,

hope, and joy-so as to leave a witness behind them of the truth of God's word and the excellency of his ways, for the conviction and establishment of all who attend them in their dying moments. The best way in which parents can finish their course is blessing their families and worshipping their God. We have now come to,

X. The faith of Joseph, v. 22. And here also we consider,

1. What he did by his faith: *He made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones.* The passage is out of Gen. 50:24, 25. Joseph was eminent for his faith, though he had not enjoyed the helps for it which the rest of his brethren had. He was sold into Egypt. He was tried by temptations, by sin, by persecution, for retaining his integrity. He was tried by preferment and power in the court of Pharaoh, and yet his faith held out and carried him through to the last. (1.) He made mention by faith of the departing of the children of Israel, that the time should come when they should be delivered out of Egypt; and he did this both that he might caution them against the thoughts of settling in Egypt, which was now a place of plenty and ease to them; and also that he might keep them from sinking under the calamities and distresses which he foresaw were coming upon them there; and he does it to comfort himself, that though he should not live to see their deliverance, yet he could die in the faith of it. (2.) He gave commandment concerning his bones, that they should preserve them unburied in Egypt, till God should deliver them out of that house of bondage, and that then they should carry his bones along with them into Canaan and deposit them there. Though believers are chiefly concerned for their souls, yet they cannot wholly neglect their bodies, as being members of Christ and parts of themselves, which shall at length be raised up, and be the happy companions of their glorified souls to all eternity. Now Joseph gave this order, not that he thought his being buried in Egypt would either prejudice his soul or prevent the resurrection of his body (as some of the rabbis fancied that all the Jews who were buried out of Canaan must be conveyed underground to Canaan before they could rise again), but to testify, [1.] That though he had lived and died in Egypt, yet he did not live and die an Egyptian, but an Israelite. [2.] That he preferred a significant burial in Canaan before a magnificent one in Egypt. [3.] That he would go as far with his people as he could, though he could not go as far as he would. [4.] That he believed the resurrection of the body, and the communion that his soul should presently have with departed saints, as his body had with their dead bodies. [5.] To assure them that God would be with them in Egypt, and deliver them out of it in his own time and way.

2. When it was that the faith of Joseph acted after this manner; namely, as in the case of Jacob, when he was dying. God often gives his people living comforts in dying moments; and when he does it is their duty, as they can, to communicate them to those about them, for the glory of God, for the honour of religion, and for the good of their brethren and friends. We go on now to,

XI. The faith of the parents of Moses, which is cited from Ex. 2:3, etc. Here observe, 1. The acting of their faith: they hid this their son three months. Though only the mother of Moses is mentioned in the history, yet, by what is here said, it seems his father not only consented to it, but consulted about it. It is a happy thing where yoke-fellows draw together in the yoke of faith, as heirs of the grace of God; and when they do this in a religious concern for the good of their children, to preserve them not only from those who would destroy their lives, but from those who would corrupt their minds. Observe, Moses was persecuted

betimes, and forced to be concealed; in this he was a type of Christ, who was persecuted almost as soon as he was born, and his parents were obliged to flee with him into Egypt for his preservation. It is a great mercy to be free from wicked laws and edicts; but, when we are not, we must use all lawful means for our security. In this faith of Moses's parents there was a mixture of unbelief, but God was pleased to overlook it. 2. The reasons of their thus acting. No doubt, natural affection could not but move them; but there was something further. They *saw he was a proper child, a goodly child* (Ex. 2:2), *exceedingly fair*, as in Acts 7:20, *asteios tou Theou*—*venustus Deo*—*fair to God*. There appeared in him something uncommon; the beauty of the Lord sat upon him, as a presage that he was born to great things, and that by conversing with God his face should shine (Ex. 34:29), what bright and illustrious actions he should do for the deliverance of Israel, and how his name should shine in the sacred records. Sometimes, not always, the countenance is the index of the mind. 3. The prevalency of their faith over their fear. They were not afraid of the king's commandment, Ex. 1:22. That was a wicked and a cruel edict, that all the males of the Israelites should be destroyed in their infancy, and so the name of Israel must be destroyed out of the earth. But they did not so fear as presently to give up their child; they considered that, if none of the males were preserved, there would be an end and utter ruin of the church of God and the true religion, and that though in their present state of servitude and oppression one would praise the dead rather than the living, yet they believed that God would preserve his people, and that the time was coming when it would be worth while for an Israelite to live. Some must hazard their own lives to preserve their children, and they were resolved to do it; they knew the king's commandment was evil in itself, contrary to the laws of God and nature, and therefore of no authority nor obligation. Faith is a great preservative against the sinful slavish fear of men, as it sets God before the soul, and shows the vanity of the creature and its subordination to the will and power of God. The apostle next proceeds to, XII. The faith of Moses himself (v. 24, 25, etc.), here observe,

1. An instance of his faith in conquering the world.

(1.) He *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter*, whose foundling he was, and her fondling too; she had adopted him for his son, and he refused it. Observe, [1.] How great a temptation Moses was under. Pharaoh's daughter is said to have been his only child, and was herself childless; and having found Moses, and saved him as she did, she resolved to take him and bring him up as her son; and so he stood fair to be in time king of Egypt, and he might thereby have been serviceable to Israel. He owed his life to this princess; and to refuse such kindness from her would look not only like ingratitude to her, but a neglect of Providence, that seemed to intend his advancement and his brethren's advantage. [2.] How glorious was the triumph of his faith in so great a trial. He *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter* lest he should undervalue the truer honour of being a son of Abraham, the father of the faithful; *he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter* lest it should look like renouncing his religion as well as his relation to Israel; and no doubt both these he must have done if he had accepted this honour; he therefore nobly refused it.

(2.) He chose *rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*, v. 25. He was willing to take his lot with the people of God here, though it was a suffering lot, that he might have his portion with them hereafter, rather than to enjoy all the sensual sinful pleasures of Pharaoh's court, which would be but for a season, and would

then be punished with everlasting misery. Herein he acted rationally as well as religiously, and conquered the temptation to worldly pleasure as he had done before to worldly preferment. Here observe, [1.] The pleasures of sin are and will be but short; they must end in speedy repentance or in speedy ruin. [2.] The pleasures of this world, and especially those of a court, are too often the pleasures of sin; and they are always so when we cannot enjoy them without deserting God and his people. A true believer will despise them when they are offered upon such terms. [3.] Suffering is to be chosen rather than sin, there being more evil in the least sin than there can be in the greatest suffering. [4.] It greatly alleviates the evil of suffering when we suffer with the people of God, embarked in the same interest and animated by the same Spirit.

(3.) He accounted *the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*, v. 26. See how Moses weighed matters: in one scale he put the worst of religion—*the reproaches of Christ*, in the other scale the best of the world—*the treasures of Egypt*; and in his judgment, directed by faith, the worst of religion weighed down the best of the world. The reproaches of the church of God are *the reproaches of Christ*, who is, and has ever been, the head of the church. Now here Moses conquered the riches of the world, as before he had conquered its honours and pleasures. God's people are, and always have been, a reproached people. Christ accounts himself reproached in their reproaches; and, while he thus interests himself in their reproaches, they become riches, and greater riches than the treasures of the richest empire in the world; for Christ will reward them with a crown of glory that fades not away. Faith discerns this, and determines and acts accordingly.

2. The circumstance of time is taken notice of, when Moses by his faith gained this victory over the world, in all its honours, pleasures, and treasures: *When he had come to years* (v. 24); not only to years of discretion, but of experience, to the age of forty years—when he was great, or had come to maturity. Some would take this as detracting from his victory, that he gained it so late, that he did not make this choice sooner; but it is rather an enhancement of the honour of his self-denial and victory over the world that he made this choice when he had grown ripe for judgment and enjoyment, able to know what he did and why he did it. It was not the act of a child, that prefers counters to gold, but it proceeded from mature deliberation. It is an excellent thing for persons to be seriously religious when in the midst of worldly business and enjoyments, to despise the world when they are most capable of relishing and enjoying it.

3. What it was that supported and strengthened the faith of Moses to such a degree as to enable him to gain such a victory over the world: *He had respect unto the recompense of reward*, that is, say some, the deliverance out of Egypt; but doubtless it means much more—the glorious reward of faith and fidelity in the other world. Observe here, (1.) Heaven is a great reward, surpassing not only all our deservings, but all our conceptions. It is a reward suitable to the price paid for it—the blood of Christ; suitable to the perfections of God, and fully answering to all his promises. It is a recompense of reward, because given by a righteous Judge for the righteousness of Christ to righteous persons, according to the righteous rule of the covenant of grace. (2.) Believers may and ought to have respect to this recompense of reward; they should acquaint themselves with it, approve of it, and live in the daily and delightful expectation of it. Thus it will prove a land-mark to direct their course, a load-stone to draw their hearts, a sword to conquer their enemies, a spur to quicken them to duty, and a cordial to refresh them under all the difficulties of doing and suffering work.

4. We have another instance of the faith of Moses, namely, in forsaking Egypt: *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king*, v. 27. Observe here, (1.) The product of his faith: *He forsook Egypt*, and all its power and pleasures, and undertook the conduct of Israel out of it. Twice Moses forsook Egypt: [1.] As a supposed criminal, when the king's wrath was incensed against him for killing the Egyptian (Ex. 2:14, 15), where it is said he feared, not with a fear of despondency, but of discretion, to save his life. [2.] As a commander and ruler in Jeshurun, after God had employed him to humble Pharaoh and make him willing to let Israel go. (2.) The prevalency of his faith. It raised him above the fear of the king's wrath. Though he knew that it was great, and levelled at him in particular, and that it marched at the head of a numerous host to pursue him, yet he was not dismayed, and he said to Israel, *Fear not*, Ex. 14:13. Those who forsook Egypt must expect the wrath of men; but they need not fear it, for they are under the conduct of that God who is able to make the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder of it. (3.) The principle upon which his faith acted in these his motions: *He endured, as seeing him that was invisible*. He bore up with invincible courage under all danger, and endured all the fatigue of his employment, which was very great; and this by seeing the invisible God. Observe, [1.] The God with whom we have to do is an invisible God: he is so to our senses, to the eye of the body; and this shows the folly of those who pretend to make images of God, whom no man hath seen, nor can see. [2.] By faith we may see this invisible God. We may be fully assured of his existence, of his providence, and of his gracious and powerful presence with us. [3.] Such a sight of God will enable believers to endure to the end whatever they may meet with in the way.

5. We have yet another instance of the faith of Moses, in keeping *the passover and sprinkling of blood*, v. 28. The account of this we have in Ex. 12:13–23. Though all Israel kept this passover, yet it was by Moses that God delivered the institution of it; and, though it was a great mystery, Moses by faith both delivered it to the people and kept it that night in the house where he lodged. The passover was one of the most solemn institutions of the Old Testament, and a very significant type of Christ. The occasion of its first observance was extraordinary: it was in the same night that God slew the first-born of the Egyptians; but, though the Israelites lived among them, the destroying angel passed over their houses, and spared them and theirs. Now, to entitle them to this distinguishing favour, and to mark them out for it, a lamb must be slain; the blood of it must be sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop upon the lintel of the door, and on the two side-posts; the flesh of the lamb must be roasted with fire; and it must be all of it eaten that very night with bitter herbs, in a travelling posture, their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand. This was accordingly done, and the destroying angel passed over them, and slew the first-born of the Egyptians. This opened a way for the return of Abraham's posterity into the land of promise. The accommodation of this type is not difficult. (1.) Christ is that Lamb, he is our Passover, he was sacrificed for us. (2.) His blood must be sprinkled; it must be applied to those who have the saving benefit of it. (3.) It is applied effectually only to the Israelites, the chosen people of God. (4.) It is not owing to our inherent righteousness or best performances that we are saved from the wrath of God, but to the blood of Christ and his imputed righteousness. If any of the families of Israel had neglected the sprinkling of this blood upon their doors, though they should have spent all the night in prayer, the destroying angel would have broken in upon them, and slain their first-born. (5.) Wherever this blood is applied, the soul receives a whole Christ by faith, and lives upon him. (6.)

This true faith makes sin bitter to the soul, even while it receives the pardon and atonement. (7.) All our spiritual privileges on earth should quicken us to set out early, and get forward, in our way to heaven. (8.) Those who have been marked out must ever remember and acknowledge free and distinguishing grace.

XIII. The next instance of faith is that of the Israelites passing through the Red Sea under the conduct of Moses their leader, v. 29. The story we have in Exodus, ch. 14. Observe,

1. The preservation and safe passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, when there was no other way to escape from Pharaoh and his host, who were closely pursuing them. Here we may observe, (1.) Israel's danger was very great; an enraged enemy with chariots and horsemen behind them; steep rocks and mountains on either hand, and the Red Sea before them. (2.) Their deliverance was very glorious. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; the grace of faith will help us through all the dangers we meet with in our way to heaven.

2. The destruction of the Egyptians. They, presumptuously attempting to follow Israel through the Red Sea, being thus blinded and hardened to their ruin, were all drowned. Their rashness was great, and their ruin was grievous. When God judges, he will overcome; and it is plain that the destruction of sinners is of themselves.

XIV. The next instance of faith is that of the Israelites, under Joshua their leader, before the walls of Jericho. The story we have Jos. 6:5, etc. Here observe, 1. The means prescribed to God to bring down the walls of Jericho. It was ordered that they should compass the walls about once a day for seven days together and seven times the last day, that the priests should carry the ark when they compassed the walls about, and should blow with trumpets made of rams' horns, and sound a longer blast than before, and then all the people should shout, and the walls of Jericho should fall before them. Here was a great trial of their faith. The method prescribed seemed very improbable to answer such an end, and would doubtless expose them to the daily contempt of their enemies; the ark of God would seem to be in danger. But this was the way God commanded them to take, and he loves to do great things by small and contemptible means, that his own arm may be made bare. 2. The powerful success of the prescribed means. The walls of Jericho fell before them. This was a frontier town in the land of Canaan, the first that stood out against the Israelites. God was pleased in this extraordinary manner to slight and dismantle it, in order to magnify himself, to terrify the Canaanites, to strengthen the faith of the Israelites, and to exclude all boasting. God can and will in his own time and way cause all the powerful opposition that is made to his interest and glory to fall down, and the grace of faith is mighty through God for the pulling down of strong-holds; he will make Babylon fall before the faith of his people, and, when he has some great thing to do for them, he raises up great and strong faith in them.

XV. The next instance is the faith of Rahab, v. 31. Among the noble army of believing worthies, bravely marshalled by the apostle, Rahab comes in the rear, to show *that God is no respecter of persons*. Here consider,

1. Who this Rahab was. (1.) She was a Canaanite, a *stranger to the commonwealth of Israel*, and had but little help for faith, and yet she was a believer; the power of divine grace greatly appears when it works without the usual means of grace. (2.) She was a harlot, and lived in a way of sin; she was not only a keeper of a public house, but a common woman of the town, and yet she believed that the greatness of sin, if truly repented of, shall be no bar to the pardoning mercy of God. Christ has saved the

chief of sinners. *Where sin has abounded, grace has superabounded.*

2. What she did by her faith: *She received the spies in peace*, the men that Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho, Jos. 2:6, 7. She not only bade them welcome, but she concealed them from their enemies who sought to cut them off, and she made a noble confession of her faith, v. 9–11. She engaged them to covenant with her to show favour to her and hers, when God should show kindness to them, and that they would give her a sign, which they did, a line of scarlet, which she was to hang forth out of the window; she sent them away with prudent and friendly advice. Learn here, (1.) True faith will show itself in good works, especially towards the people of God. (2.) Faith will venture all hazards in the cause of God and his people; a true believer will sooner expose his own person than God's interest and people. (3.) A true believer is desirous, not only to be in covenant with God, but in communion with the people of God, and is willing to cast in his lot with them, and to fare as they fare.

Verses 32-40

The apostle having given us a classis of many eminent believers, whose names are mentioned and the particular trials and actings of their faith recorded, now concludes his narrative with a more summary account of another set of believers, where the particular acts are not ascribed to particular persons by name, but left to be applied by those who are well acquainted with the sacred story; and, like a divine orator, he prefaces his part of the narrative with an elegant expostulation: *What shall I say more? Time would fail me;* as if he had said, "It is in vain to attempt to exhaust this subject; should I not restrain my pen, it would soon run beyond the bounds of an epistle; and therefore I shall but just mention a few more, and leave you to enlarge upon them." Observe, 1. After all our researches into the scripture, there is still more to be learned from them. 2. We must well consider in divine matters what we should say, and suit it as well as we can to the time. 3. We should be pleased to think how great the number of believers was under the Old Testament, and how strong their faith, though the objects thereof were not then so fully revealed. And, 4. We should lament it, that now, in gospel times, when the rule of faith is more clear and perfect, the number of believers should be so small and their faith so weak.

I. In this summary account the apostle mentions,

1. Gideon, whose story we have in Judges 6:11, etc. He was an eminent instrument raised up of God to deliver his people from the oppression of the Midianites; he was a person of mean tribe and family, called from a mean employment (threshing wheat), and saluted by an angel of God in this surprising manner, *The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of war.* Gideon could not at first receive such honours, but humbly expostulates with the angel about their low and distressed state. The angel of the Lord delivers him his commission, and assures him of success, confirming the assurance by fire out of the rock. Gideon is directed to offer sacrifice, and, instructed in his duty, goes forth against the Midianites, when his army is reduced from thirty-two thousand to three hundred; yet by these, with their lamps and pitchers, God put the whole army of the Midianites to confusion and ruin: and the same faith that gave Gideon so much courage and honour enabled him to act with great meekness and modesty towards his brethren afterwards. It is the excellency of the grace of faith that, while it helps men to do great things, it keeps them from having high and great thoughts of themselves.

2. Barak, another instrument raised up to deliver Israel out of the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, Judges 4, where we read, (1.)

Though he was a soldier, yet he received his commission and instructions from Deborah, a *prophetess of the Lord*; and he insisted upon having this divine oracle with him in his expedition. (2.) He obtained a great victory by his faith over all the host of Sisera. (3.) His faith taught him to return all the praise and glory to God: this is the nature of faith; it has recourse unto God in all dangers and difficulties, and then makes grateful returns to God for all mercies and deliverances.

3. Samson, another instrument that God raised up to deliver Israel from the Philistines: his story we have in Judges 13, 14, 15, and 16, and from it we learn that the grace of faith is the strength of the soul for great service. If Samson had not had a strong faith as well as a strong arm, he had never performed such exploits. Observe, (1.) By faith the servants of God shall overcome even the roaring lion. (2.) True faith is acknowledged and accepted, even when mingled with many failings. (3.) The believer's faith endures to the end, and, in dying, gives him victory over death and all his deadly enemies; his greatest conquest he gains by dying.

4. Jephthah, whose story we have, Jud. 11, before that of Samson. He was raised up to deliver Israel from the Ammonites. As various and new enemies rise up against the people of God, various and new deliverers are raised up for them. In the story of Jephthah observe, (1.) The grace of God often finds out, and fastens upon, the most undeserving and ill-deserving persons, to do great things for them and by them. Jephthah was the son of a harlot. (2.) The grace of faith, wherever it is, will put men upon acknowledging God in all their ways (ch. 11:11): *Jephthah rehearsed all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh*. (3.) The grace of faith will make men bold and venturous in a good cause. (4.) Faith will not only put men upon making their vows to God, but paying their vows after the mercy received; yea, though they have vowed to their own great grief, hurt, and loss, as in the case of Jephthah and his daughter.

5. David, that great man after God's own heart. Few ever met with greater trials, and few ever discovered a more lively faith. His first appearance on the stage of the world was a great evidence of his faith. Having, when young, slain *the lion and the bear*, his faith in God encouraged him to encounter the great Goliath, and helped him to triumph over him. The same faith enabled him to bear patiently the ungrateful malice of Saul and his favourites, and to wait till God should put him into possession of the promised power and dignity. The same faith made him a very successful and victorious prince, and, after a long life of virtue and honour (though not without some foul stains of sin), he died in faith, relying upon the everlasting covenant that God had made with him and his, ordered in all things and sure; and he has left behind him such excellent memoirs of the trials and acts of faith in the book of Psalms as will ever be of great esteem and use, among the people of God.

6. Samuel, raised up to be a most eminent prophet of the Lord to Israel, as well as a ruler over them. God revealed himself to Samuel when he was but a child, and continued to do so till his death. In his story observe, (1.) Those are likely to grow up to some eminency in faith who begin betimes in the exercise of it. (2.) Those whose business it is to reveal the mind and will of God to others had need to be well established in the belief of it themselves.

7. To Samuel he adds, *and of the prophets*, who were extraordinary ministers of the Old-Testament church, employed of God sometimes to denounce judgment, sometimes to promise mercy, always to reprove sin; sometimes to foretell remarkable events, known only to God; and chiefly to give notice of the Messiah, his coming, person, and offices; for in him the prophets

as well as the law center. Now a true and strong faith was very requisite for the right discharge of such an office as this.

II. Having done naming particular persons, he proceeds to tell us what things were done by their faith. He mentions some things that easily apply themselves to one or other of the persons named; but he mentions other things that are not so easy to be accommodated to any here named, but must be left to general conjecture or accommodation.

1. *By faith they subdued kingdoms*, v. 33. Thus did David, Joshua, and many of the judges. Learn hence, (1.) The interests and powers of kings and kingdoms are often set up in opposition to God and his people. (2.) God can easily subdue all those kings and kingdoms that set themselves to oppose him. (3.) Faith is a suitable and excellent qualification of those who fight in the ways of the Lord; it makes them just, bold, and wise.

2. They *wrought righteousness*, both in their public and personal capacities; they turned many from idolatry to the ways of righteousness; they believed God, and it was imputed to them for righteousness; they walked and acted righteously towards God and man. It is a greater honour and happiness to work righteousness than to work miracles; faith is an active principle of universal righteousness.

3. They *obtained promises*, both general and special. It is faith that gives us an interest in the promises; it is by faith that we have the comfort of the promises; and it is by faith that we are prepared to wait for the promises, and in due time to receive them.

4. They *stopped the mouths of lions*; so did Samson, Jdg. 14:5, 6, and David, 1 Sa. 17:34, 35, and Daniel, 6:22. Here learn, (1.) The power of God is above the power of the creature. (2.) Faith engages the power of God for his people, whenever it shall be for his glory, to overcome brute beasts and brutish men.

5. They *quenched the violence of the fire*, v. 34. So Moses, by the prayer of faith, quenched the fire of God's wrath that was kindled against the people of Israel, Num. 11:1, 2. So did the three children, or rather mighty champions, Dan. 3:17–27. Their faith in God, refusing to worship the golden image, exposed them to the fiery furnace which Nebuchadnezzar had prepared for them, and their faith engaged for them that power and presence of God in the furnace which quenched the violence of the fire, so that not so much as the smell thereof passed on them. Never was the grace of faith more severely tried, never more nobly exerted, nor ever more gloriously rewarded, than theirs was.

6. They *escaped the edge of the sword*. Thus David escaped the sword of Goliath and of Saul; and Mordecai and the Jews escaped the sword of Haman. The swords of men are held in the hand of God, and he can blunt the edge of the sword, and turn it away from his people against their enemies when he pleases. Faith takes hold of that hand of God which has hold of the swords of men; and God has often suffered himself to be prevailed upon by the faith of his people.

7. *Out of weakness they were made strong*. From national weakness, into which the Jews often fell by their unbelief; upon the revival of their faith, all their interest and affairs revived and flourished. From bodily weakness; thus Hezekiah, believing the word of God, recovered out of a mortal distemper, and he ascribed his recovery to the promise and power of God (Isa. 38:15, 16), *What shall I say? He hath spoken it, and he hath also done it. Lord by these things men live, and in these is the life of my spirit*. And it is the same grace of faith that from spiritual weakness helps men to recover and renew their strength.

8. They *grew valiant in fight*. So did Joshua, the judges, and David. True faith gives truest courage and patience, as it discerns the strength of God, and thereby the weakness of all his enemies. And they were not only valiant, but successful. God, as a reward and encouragement of their faith, *put to flight the armies of the aliens*, of those who were aliens to their commonwealth, and enemies to their religion; God made them flee and fall before his faithful servants. Believing and praying commanders, at the head of believing and praying armies, have been so owned and honoured of God that nothing could stand before them.

9. *Women received their dead raised to life again*, v. 35. So did the widow of Zarepath (1 Ki. 17:23), and the Shunamite, 2 Ki. 4:36. (1.) *In Christ there is neither male nor female*; many of the weaker sex have been strong in faith. (2.) Though the covenant of grace takes in the children of believers, yet it leaves them subject to natural death. (3.) Poor mothers are loth to resign up their interest in their children, though death has taken them away. (4.) God has sometimes yielded so far to the tender affections of sorrowful women as to restore their dead children to life again. Thus Christ had compassion on the widow of Nain, Lu. 7:12, etc. (5.) This should confirm our faith in the general resurrection.

III. The apostle tells us what these believers endured by faith. 1. They *were tortured, not accepting deliverance*, v. 35. They were put upon the rack, to make them renounce their God, their Saviour, and their religion. They bore the torture, and would not accept of deliverance upon such vile terms; and that which animated them thus to suffer was the hope they had of *obtaining a better resurrection*, and deliverance upon more honourable terms. This is thought to refer to that memorable story, 2 Macc. ch. 7, etc. 2. They endured *trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, and bonds and imprisonment*, v. 36. They were persecuted in their reputation by *mockings*, which are cruel to an ingenuous mind; in their persons by *scourging*, the punishment of slaves; in their liberty by *bonds and imprisonment*. Observe how inveterate is the malice that wicked men have towards the righteous, how far it will go, and what a variety of cruelties it will invent and exercise upon those against whom they have no cause of quarrel, except in the matters of their God. 3. They were put to death in the most cruel manner; some *were stoned*, as Zechariah (2 Chr. 24:21), *sawn asunder*, as Isaiah by Manasseh. *They were tempted*; some read it, *burnt*, 2 Macc. 7:5. *They were slain with the sword*. All sorts of deaths were prepared for them; their enemies clothed death in all the array of cruelty and terror, and yet they boldly met it and endured it. 4. Those who escaped death were used so ill that death might seem more eligible than such a life. Their enemies spared them, only to prolong their misery, and wear out all their patience; for they were forced to *wander about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented; they wandered about in deserts, and on mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth*, v. 37, 38. They were stripped of the conveniences of life, and turned out of house and harbour. They had not raiment to put on, but were forced to cover themselves with the skins of slain beasts. They were driven out of all human society, and forced to converse with the beasts of the field, to hide themselves in dens and caves, and make their complaint to rocks and rivers, not more obdurate than their enemies. Such sufferings as these they endured then for their faith; and such they endured through the power of the grace of faith: and which shall we most admire, the wickedness of human nature, that is capable of perpetrating such cruelties on fellow creatures, or the excellency of divine grace, that is able to bear up the faithful under such cruelties, and to carry them safely through all?

IV. What they obtained by their faith. 1. A most honourable character and commendation from God, the true Judge and fountain of honour—that *the world was not worthy* of such men; the world did not deserve such blessings; they did not know how to value them, nor how to use them. Wicked men! The righteous are not worthy to live in the world, and God declares the world is not worthy of them; and, though they widely differ in their judgment, they agree in this, that it is not fit that good men should have their rest in this world; and therefore God receives them out of it, to that world that is suitable to them, and yet far beyond the merit of all their services and sufferings. 2. They *obtained a good report* (v. 39) of all good men, and of the truth itself, and have the honour to be enrolled in this sacred calendar of the Old-Testament worthies, God's witnesses; yea, they had a witness for them in the consciences of their enemies, who, while they thus abused them, were condemned by their own consciences, as persecuting those who were more righteous than themselves. 3. They obtained an interest in the promises, though not the full possession of them. They had a title to the promises, though they received not the great things promised. This is not meant of the felicity of the heavenly state, for this they did receive, when they died, in the measure of a part, in one constituent part of their persons, and the much better part; but it is meant of the felicity of the gospel-state: they had types, but not the antitype; they had shadows, but had not seen the substance; and yet, under this imperfect dispensation, they discovered this precious faith. This the apostle insists upon to render the faith more illustrious, and to provoke Christians to a holy jealousy and emulation; that they should not suffer themselves to be outdone in the exercise of faith by those who came so short of them in all the helps and advantages for believing. He tells the Hebrews that God had *provided some better things for* them (v. 40), and therefore they might be assured that he expected at least as good things from them; and that since the gospel is the end and perfection of the Old Testament, which had no excellency but in its reference to Christ and the gospel, it was expected that their faith should be as much more perfect than the faith of the Old-Testament saints; for their state and dispensation were more perfect than the former, and were indeed the perfection and completion of the former, for without the gospel-church the Jewish church must have remained in an incomplete and imperfect state. This reasoning is strong, and should be effectually prevalent with us all.

Chapter 12

The apostle, in this chapter, applies what he has collected in the chapter foregoing, and makes use of it as a great motive to patience and perseverance in the Christian faith and state, pressing home the argument, I. From a greater example than he had yet mentioned, and that is Christ himself (v. 1-3). II. From the gentle and gracious nature of the afflictions they endured in their Christian course (v. 4–17). III. From the communion and conformity between the state of the gospel-church on earth and the triumphant church in heaven (v. 18 to the end).

Verses 1-3

Here observe what is the great duty which the apostle urges upon the Hebrews, and which he so much desires they would comply with, and that is, to *lay aside every weight, and the sin that did so easily beset them, and run with patience the race set before them*. The duty consists of two parts, the one preparatory, the other perfective.

I. Preparatory: *Lay aside every weight, and the sin*, etc. 1. *Every weight*, that is, all inordinate affection and concern for the body, and the present life and world. Inordinate care for the present life, or fondness for it, is a dead weight upon the soul, that pulls it down when it should ascend upwards, and pulls it back when it should press forward; it makes duty and difficulties harder and heavier than they would be. 2. *The sin that doth so easily beset us*; the sin that has the greatest advantage against us, by the circumstances we are in, our constitution, our company. This may mean either the damning sin of unbelief or rather the darling sin of the Jews, an over-fondness for their own dispensation. *Let us lay aside* all external and internal hindrances.

II. Perfective: *Run with patience the race that is set before us*. The apostle speaks in the gymnastic style, taken from the Olympic and other exercises.

1. Christians have a race to run, a race of service and a race of sufferings, a course of active and passive obedience.

2. This race is set before them; it is marked out unto them, both by the word of God and the examples of the faithful servants of God, that cloud of witnesses with which they are compassed about. It is set out by proper limits and directions; the mark they run to, and the prize they run for, are set before them.

3. This race must be run with patience and perseverance. There will be need of patience to encounter the difficulties that lie in our way, of perseverance to resist all temptations to desist or turn aside. Faith and patience are the conquering graces, and therefore must be always cultivated and kept in lively exercise.

4. Christians have a greater example to animate and encourage them in their Christian course than any or all who have been mentioned before, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ: *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*, v. 2. Here observe,

(1.) What our Lord Jesus is to his people: he is *the author and finisher of their faith*—the beginning, perfecter, and rewarder of it. [1.] He is the author of their faith; not only the object, but the author. He is the great leader and precedent of our faith, *he trusted in God*; he is the purchaser of the Spirit of faith, the publisher of the rule of faith, the efficient cause of the grace of faith, and in all respects the author of our faith. [2.] He is *the finisher of our faith*; he is the fulfiller and the fulfilling of all

scripture-promises and prophecies; he is the perfecter of the canon of scripture; he is the finisher of grace, and of the work of faith with power in the souls of his people; and he is the judge and the rewarder of their faith; he determines who they are that reach the mark, and from him, and in him, they have the prize.

(2.) What trials Christ met with in his race and course. [1.] He *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself* (v. 3); he bore the opposition that they made to him, both in their words and behaviour. They were continually contradicting him, and crossing in upon his great designs; and though he could easily have both confuted and confounded them, and sometimes gave them a specimen of his power, yet he endured their evil manners with great patience. Their contradictions were levelled against Christ himself, against his person as God—man, against his authority, against his preaching, and yet he endured all. [2.] He *endured the cross*—all those sufferings that he met with in the world; for he took up his cross betimes, and was at length nailed to it, and endured a painful, ignominious, and accursed death, in which he was numbered with the transgressors, the vilest malefactors; yet all this he endured with invincible patience and resolution. [3.] He *despised the shame*. All the reproaches that were cast upon him, both in his life and at his death, he despised; he was infinitely above them; he knew his own innocency and excellency, and despised the ignorance and malice of his despisers.

(3.) What it was that supported the human soul of Christ under these unparalleled sufferings; and that was *the joy that was set before him*. He had something in view under all his sufferings, which was pleasant to him; he rejoiced to see that by his sufferings he should make satisfaction to the injured justice of God and give security to his honour and government, that he should make peace between God and man, that he should seal the covenant of grace and be the Mediator of it, that he should open a way of salvation to the chief of sinners, and that he should effectually save all those whom the Father had given him, and himself be the first-born among many brethren. This was the joy that was set before him.

(4.) The reward of his suffering: he *has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*. Christ, as Mediator, is exalted to a station of the highest honour, of the greatest power and influence; he is at the right hand of the Father. Nothing passes between heaven and earth but by him; he does all that is done; *he ever lives to make intercession for his people*.

(5.) What is our duty with respect to this Jesus. We must, [1.] Look unto him; that is, we must set him continually before us as our example, and our great encouragement; we must look to him for direction, for assistance, and for acceptance, in all our sufferings. [2.] We must consider him, meditate much upon him, and reason with ourselves from his case to our own. We must *analogize*, as the word is; compare Christ's sufferings and ours; and we shall find that as his sufferings far exceeded ours, in the nature and measure of them, so his patience far excels ours, and is a perfect pattern for us to imitate.

(6.) The advantage we shall reap by thus doing: it will be a means to prevent our weariness and fainting (v. 3): *Lest you be weary and faint in your minds*. Observe, [1.] There is a proneness in the best to grow weary and to faint under their trials and afflictions, especially when they prove heavy and of long continuance: this proceeds from the imperfections of grace and the remains of corruption. [2.] The best way to prevent this is to look unto Jesus, and to consider him. Faith and meditation will fetch in fresh supplies of strength, comfort, and courage; for he has assured them, if *they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him*: and this hope will be their helmet.

Verses 4-17

Here the apostle presses the exhortation to patience and perseverance by an argument taken from the gentle measure and gracious nature of those sufferings which the believing Hebrews endured in their Christian course.

I. From the gentle and moderate degree and measure of their sufferings: *You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin*, v. 4. Observe,

1. He owns that they had suffered much, they had been striving to an agony against sin. Here, (1.) The cause of the conflict was sin, and to be engaged against sin is to fight in a good cause, for sin is the worst enemy both to God and man. Our spiritual warfare is both honourable and necessary; for we are only defending ourselves against that which would destroy us, if it should get the victory over us; we fight for ourselves, for our lives, and therefore ought to be patient and resolute. (2.) Every Christian is enlisted under Christ's banner, to strive against sin, against sinful doctrines, sinful practices, and sinful habits and customs, both in himself and in others.

2. He puts them in mind that they might have suffered more, that they had not suffered as much as others; for they had *not yet resisted unto blood*, they had not been called to martyrdom as yet, though they knew not how soon they might be. Learn here, (1.) Our Lord Jesus, *the captain of our salvation*, does not call his people out to the hardest trials at first, but wisely trains them up by less sufferings to be prepared for greater. He will not put new wine into weak vessels, he is *the gentle shepherd*, who will not overdrive *the young ones of the flock*. (2.) It becomes Christians to take notice of the gentleness of Christ in accommodating their trial to their strength. They should not magnify their afflictions, but should take notice of the mercy that is mixed with them, and should pity those who are called to the fiery trials to *resist to blood*; not to shed the blood of their enemies, but to seal their testimony with their own blood. (3.) Christians should be ashamed to faint under less trials, when they see others bear up under greater, and do not know how soon they may meet with greater themselves. If we have run with the footmen and they have wearied us, how shall we contend with horses? If we be wearied in a land of peace, what shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? Jer. 12:5.

II. He argues from the peculiar and gracious nature of those sufferings that befall the people of God. Though their enemies and persecutors may be the instruments of inflicting such sufferings on them, yet they are divine chastisements; their heavenly Father has his hand in all, and his wise end to serve by all; of this he has given them due notice, and they should not forget it, v. 5. Observe,

1. Those afflictions which may be truly persecution as far as men are concerned in them are fatherly rebukes and chastisements as far as God is concerned in them. Persecution for religion is sometimes a correction and rebuke for the sins of professors of religion. Men persecute them because they are religious; God chastises them because they are not more so: men persecute them because they will not give up their profession; God chastises them because they have not lived up to their profession.

2. God has directed his people how they ought to behave themselves under all their afflictions; they must avoid the extremes that many run into. (1.) They must not despise the chastening of the Lord; they must not make light of afflictions, and be stupid and insensible under them, for they are the hand and rod of God, and his rebukes for sin. Those who make light of affliction

make light of God and make light of sin. (2.) They must not faint when they are rebuked; they must not despond and sink under their trial, nor fret and repine, but bear up with faith and patience. (3.) If they run into either of these extremes, it is a sign they have forgotten their heavenly Father's advice and exhortation, which he has given them in true and tender affection. 3. Afflictions, rightly endured, though they may be the fruits of God's displeasure, are yet proofs of his paternal love to his people and care for them (v. 6, 7): *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*. Observe, (1.) The best of God's children need chastisement. They have their faults and follies, which need to be corrected. (2.) Though God may let others alone in their sins, he will correct sin in his own children; they are of his family, and shall not escape his rebukes when they want them. (3.) In this he acts as becomes a father, and treats them like children; no wise and good father will wink at faults in his own children as he would in others; his relation and his affections oblige him to take more notice of the faults of his own children than those of others. (4.) To be suffered to go on in sin without a rebuke is a sad sign of alienation from God; such are bastards, not sons. They may call him Father, because born in the pale of the church; but they are the spurious offspring of another father, not of God, v. 7, 8.

4. Those that are impatient under the discipline of their heavenly Father behave worse towards him than they would do towards earthly parents, v. 9, 10. Here, (1.) The apostle commends a dutiful and submissive behaviour in children towards their earthly parents *We gave them reverence*, even when they corrected us. It is the duty of children to give the reverence of obedience to the just commands of their parents, and the reverence of submission to their correction when they have been disobedient. Parents have not only authority, but a charge from God, to give their children correction when it is due, and he has commanded children to take such correction well: to be stubborn and discontented under due correction is a double fault; for the correction supposes there has been a fault already committed against the parent's commanding power, and superadds a further fault against his chastening power. Hence, (2.) He recommends humble and submissive behavior towards our heavenly Father, when under his correction; and this he does by an argument from the less to the greater. [1.] Our earthly fathers are but *the fathers of our flesh*, but God is *the Father of our spirits*. Our fathers on earth were instrumental in the production of our bodies, which are but flesh, a mean, mortal, vile thing, formed out of the dust of the earth, as the bodies of the beasts are; and yet as they are curiously wrought, and made parts of our persons, a proper tabernacle for the soul to dwell in and an organ for it to act by, we owe reverence and affection to those who were instrumental in their procreation; but then we must own much more to him who is the Father of our spirits. Our souls are not of a material substance, not of the most refined sort; they are not *ex traduce*—by *traduction*; to affirm it is bad philosophy, and worse divinity: they are the immediate offspring of God, who, after he had formed the body of man out of the earth, breathed into him a vital spirit, and so he became a living soul. [2.] Our earthly parents *chastened us for their own pleasure*. Sometimes they did it to gratify their passion rather than to reform our manners. This is a weakness the fathers of our flesh are subject to, and this they should carefully watch against; for hereby they dishonour that parental authority which God has put upon them and very much hinder the efficacy of their chastisements. But the Father of our spirits never grieves willingly, nor afflicts the children of men, much less his own children. It is always *for our profit*; and the advantage he intends us thereby is no less than our being partakers of his holiness; it is to correct and cure

those sinful disorders which make us unlike to God, and to improve and to increase those graces which are the image of God in us, that we may be and act more like our heavenly Father. God loves his children so that he would have them to be as like himself as can be, and for this end he chastises them when they need it. [3.] The fathers of our flesh corrected us for *a few days*, in our state of childhood, when minors; and, though we were in that weak and peevish state, we owed them reverence, and when we came to maturity we loved and honoured them the more for it. Our whole life here is a state of childhood, minority, and imperfection, and therefore we must submit to the discipline of such a state; when we come to a state of perfection we shall be fully reconciled to all the measures of God's discipline over us now. [4.] God's correction is no condemnation. His children may at first fear lest affliction should come upon that dreadful errand, and we cry, *Do not condemn me, but show me wherefore thou contendest with me*, Job 10:2. But this is so far from being the design of God to his own people that he therefore chastens them now *that they may not be condemned with the world*, 1 Co. 11:32. He does it to prevent the death and destruction of their souls, that they may live to God, and be like God, and for ever with him.

5. The children of God, under their afflictions, ought not to judge of his dealings with them by present sense, but by reason, and faith, and experience: *No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness*, v. 11. Here observe,

(1.) The judgment of sense in this case—Afflictions are not grateful to the sense, but grievous; the flesh will feel them, and be grieved by them, and groan under them.

(2.) The judgment of faith, which corrects that of sense, and declares that a sanctified affliction produces the fruits of righteousness; these fruits are peaceable, and tend to the quieting and comforting of the soul. Affliction produces peace, by producing more righteousness; for the fruit of righteousness is peace. And if the pain of the body contribute thus to the peace of the mind, and short present affliction produce blessed fruits of a long continuance, they have no reason to fret or faint under it; but their great concern is that the chastening they are under may be endured by them with patience, and improved to a greater degree of holiness. [1.] That their affliction may be endured with patience, which is the main drift of the apostle's discourse on this subject; and he again returns to exhort them that for the reason before mentioned they should *lift up the hands that hang down and the feeble knees*, v. 12. A burden of affliction is apt to make the Christian's hands hang down, and his knees grow feeble, to dispirit him and discourage him; but this he must strive against, and that for two reasons:—*First*, That he may the better run his spiritual race and course. Faith, and patience, and holy courage and resolution, will make him walk more steadily, keep a straighter path, prevent wavering and wandering. *Secondly*, That he may encourage and not dispirit others that are in the same way with him. There are many that are in the way to heaven who yet walk but weakly and lamely in it. Such are apt to discourage one another, and hinder one another; but it is their duty to take courage, and act by faith, and so help one another forward in the way to heaven. [2.] That their affliction may be improved to a greater degree of holiness. Since this is God's design, it ought to be the design and concern of his children, that with renewed strength and patience they may *follow peace with all men, and holiness*, v. 14. If the children of God grow impatient under affliction, they will neither walk so quietly and peaceably towards men, nor so piously towards God, as they should do; but faith and patience will enable them to follow

peace and holiness too, as a man follows his calling, constantly, diligently, and with pleasure. Observe, *First*, It is the duty of Christians, even when in a suffering state, *to follow peace with all men*, yea, even with those who may be instrumental in their sufferings. This is a hard lesson, and a high attainment, but it is what Christ has called his people to. Sufferings are apt to sour the spirit and sharpen the passions; but the children of God must follow peace with all men. *Secondly*, Peace and holiness are connected together; there can be no true peace without holiness. There may be prudence and discreet forbearance, and a show of friendship and good-will to all; but this true Christian peaceableness is never found separate from holiness. We must not, under pretence of living peaceably with all men, leave the ways of holiness, but cultivate peace in a way of holiness. *Thirdly*, *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. The vision of God our Saviour in heaven is reserved as the reward of holiness, and the stress of our salvation is laid upon our holiness, though a placid peaceable disposition contributes much to our meetness for heaven.

6. Where afflictions and sufferings for the sake of Christ are not considered by men as the chastisement of their heavenly Father, and improved as such, they will be a dangerous snare and temptation to apostasy, which every Christian should most carefully watch against (v. 15, 16): *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God*, etc.

(1.) Here the apostle enters a serious caveat against apostasy, and backs it with an awful example.

[1.] He enters a serious caveat against apostasy, v. 15. Here you may observe, *First*, The nature of apostasy: it is *failing of the grace of God*; it is to become bankrupts in religion, for want of a good foundation, and suitable care and diligence; it is *failing of the grace of God*, coming short of a principle of true grace in the soul, notwithstanding the means of grace and a profession of religion, and so coming short of the love and favour of God here and hereafter. *Secondly*, The consequences of apostasy: where persons fail of having the true grace of God, a root of bitterness will spring up, corruption will prevail and break forth. A *root of bitterness*, a bitter root, producing bitter fruits to themselves and others. It produces to themselves corrupt principles, which lead to apostasy and are greatly strengthened and radicated by apostasy—damnable errors (to the corrupting of the doctrine and worship of the Christian church) and corrupt practices. Apostates generally grow worse and worse, and fall into the grossest wickedness, which usually ends either in downright atheism or in despair. It also produces bitter fruits to others, to the churches to which these men belonged; by their corrupt principles and practices many are troubled, the peace of the church is broken, the peace of men's minds is disturbed, and *many are defiled*, tainted with those bad principles, and drawn into defiling practices; so that the churches suffer both in their purity and peace. But the apostates themselves will be the greatest sufferers at last.

[2.] The apostle backs the caution with an awful example, and that is, that of Esau, who though born within the pale of the church, and having the birthright as the eldest son, and so entitled to the privilege of being prophet, priest, and king, in his family, was so profane as to despise these sacred privileges, and to sell his birthright for a morsel of meat. Where observe, *First*, Esau's sin. He profanely despised and sold the birthright, and all the advantages attending it. So do apostates, who to avoid persecution, and enjoy sensual ease and pleasure, though they bore the character of the children of God, and had a visible right to the blessing and inheritance, give up all pretensions thereto. *Secondly*, Esau's punishment, which was suitable to his

sin. His conscience was convinced of his sin and folly, when it was too late: *He would afterwards have inherited the blessing*, etc. His punishment lay in two things: 1. He was condemned by his own conscience; he now saw that the blessing he had made so light of was worth the having, worth the seeking, though with much carefulness and many tears. 2. He was rejected of God: *He found no place of repentance* in God or in his father; the blessing was given to another, even to him to whom he sold it for a mess of pottage. Esau, in his great wickedness, had made the bargain, and God in his righteous judgment, ratified and confirmed it, and would not suffer Isaac to reverse it.

(2.) We may hence learn, [1.] That apostasy from Christ is the fruit of preferring the gratification of the flesh to the blessing of God and the heavenly inheritance. [2.] Sinners will not always have such mean thoughts of the divine blessing and inheritance as now they have. The time is coming when they will think no pains too great, no cares no tears too much, to obtain the lost blessing. [3.] When the day of grace is over (as sometimes it may be in this life), they will find no place for repentance: they cannot repent aright of their sin; and God will not repent of the sentence he has passed upon them for their sin. And therefore, as the design of all, Christians should never give up their title, and hope of their Father's blessing and inheritance, and expose themselves to his irrevocable wrath and curse, by deserting their holy religion, to avoid suffering, which, though this may be persecution as far as wicked men are concerned in it, is only a rod of correction and chastisement in the hand of their heavenly Father, to bring them near to himself in conformity and communion. This is the force of the apostle's arguing from the nature of the sufferings of the people of God even when they suffer for righteousness' sake; and the reasoning is very strong.

Verses 18-29

Here the apostle goes on to engage the professing Hebrews to perseverance in their Christian course and conflict, and not to relapse again into Judaism. This he does by showing them how much the state of the gospel church differs from that of the Jewish church, and how much it resembles the state of the church in heaven, and on both accounts demands and deserves our diligence, patience, and perseverance in Christianity.

I. He shows how much the gospel church differs from the Jewish church, and how much it excels. And here we have a very particular description of the state of the church under the Mosaic dispensation, v. 18–21. 1. It was a gross sensible state. Mount Sinai, on which that church-state was constituted, was a *mount that might be touched* (v. 18), a gross palpable place; so was the dispensation. It was very much external and earthly, and so more heavy. The state of the gospel church on mount Zion is more spiritual, rational, and easy. 2. It was a dark dispensation. Upon that mount there were blackness and darkness, and that church-state was covered with dark shadows and types: the gospel state is much more clear and bright. 3. It was a dreadful and terrible dispensation; the Jews could not bear the terror of it. The thunder and the lightning, the trumpet sounding, the voice of God himself speaking to them, struck them with such dread that they *entreated that the word might not be so spoken to them any more*, v. 19. Yea, Moses himself said, *I exceedingly fear and quake*. The best of men on earth are not able to converse immediately with God and his holy angels. The gospel state is mild, and kind, and condescending, suited to our weak frame. 4. It was a limited dispensation; all might not approach to that mount, but only Moses and Aaron. Under the gospel we have all access with boldness to God. 5. It was a very dangerous dispensation. The mount burned with fire, and whatever man or beast

touched the mount must *be stoned, or thrust through with a dart*, v. 20. It is true, it will be always dangerous for presumptuous and brutish sinners to draw nigh to God; but it is not immediate and certain death, as here it was. This was the state of the Jewish church, fitted to awe a stubborn and hard-hearted people, to set forth the strict and tremendous justice of God, to wean the people of God from that dispensation, and induce them more readily to embrace the sweet and gentle economy of the gospel church, and adhere to it.

II. He shows how much the gospel church represents the church triumphant in heaven, what communication there is between the one and the other. The gospel church is called *mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, which is free*, in opposition to mount Sinai, which tendeth to bondage, Gal. 4:24. This was the hill on which God set his king the Messiah. Now, in coming to mount Zion, believers come into heavenly places, and into a heavenly society.

1. Into heavenly places. (1.) *Unto the city of the living God*. God has taken up his gracious residence in the gospel church, which on that account is an emblem of heaven. There his people may find him ruling, guiding, sanctifying, and comforting them; there he speaks to them by the gospel ministry; there they speak to him by prayer, and he hears them; there he trains them up for heaven, and gives them the earnest of their inheritance. (2.) *To the heavenly Jerusalem* as born and bred there, as free denizens there. Here believers have clearer views of heaven, plainer evidences for heaven, and a greater meetness and more heavenly temper of soul.

2. To a heavenly society. (1.) *To an innumerable company of angels*, who are of the same family with the saints, under the same head, and in a great measure employed in the same work, ministering to believers for their good, keeping them in all their ways, and pitching their tents about them. These for number are innumerable, and for order and union are a company, and a glorious one. And those who by faith are joined to the gospel church are joined to the angels, and shall at length be like them, and equal with them. (2.) *To the general assembly and church of the first-born, that are written in heaven*, that is, to the universal church, however dispersed. By faith we come to them, have communion with them in the same head, by the same Spirit, and in the same blessed hope, and walk in the same way of holiness, grappling with the same spiritual enemies, and hasting to the same rest, victory, and glorious triumph. Here will be the general assembly of the first-born, the saints of former and earlier times, who saw the promises of the gospel state, but received them not, as well as those who first received them under the gospel, and were regenerated thereby, and so were the first-born, and the first-fruits of the gospel church; and thereby, as the first-born, advanced to greater honours and privileges than the rest of the world. Indeed all the children of God are heirs, and every one has the privileges of the first-born. The names of these are written in heaven, in the records of the church here: they have a name in God's house, are written among the living in Jerusalem; they have a good repute for their faith and fidelity, and are enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, as citizens are enrolled in the livery-books. (3.) *To God the Judge of all*, that great God who will judge both Jew and Gentile according to the law they are under: believers come to him now by faith, make supplication to their Judge, and receive a sentence of absolution in the gospel, and in the court of their consciences now, by which they know they shall be justified hereafter. (4.) *To the spirits of just men made perfect*; to the best sort of men, the righteous, who are more excellent than their neighbours; to the best part of just men, their spirits, and to these in their best

state, made perfect. Believers have union with departed saints in one and the same head and Spirit, and a title to the same inheritance, of which those on earth are heirs, those in heaven possessors. (5.) *To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.* This is none of the least of many encouragements there are to perseverance in the gospel state, since it is a state of communion with Christ the Mediator of the new covenant, and of communication of his blood, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. [1.] The gospel covenant is the new covenant, distinct from the covenant of works; and it is now under a new dispensation, distinct from that of the Old Testament. [2.] Christ is the Mediator of this new covenant; he is the middle person that goes between both parties, God and man, to bring them together in this covenant, to keep them together notwithstanding the sins of the people and God's displeasure against them for sin, to offer up our prayers to God, and to bring down the favours of God to us, to plead with God for us and to plead with us for God, and at length to bring God and his people together in heaven, and to be a Mediator of fruition between them for ever, they beholding and enjoying God in Christ and God beholding and blessing them in Christ. [3.] This covenant is ratified by the blood of Christ sprinkled upon our consciences, as the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled upon the altar and the sacrifice. This blood of Christ pacifies God and purifies the consciences of men. [4.] This is speaking blood, and it speaks better things than that of Abel. *First*, It speaks to God in behalf of sinners; it pleads not for vengeance, as the blood of Abel did on him who shed it, but for mercy. *Secondly*, To sinners, in the name of God. It speaks pardon to their sins, peace to their souls; and bespeaks their strictest obedience and highest love and thankfulness.

III. The apostle, having thus enlarged upon the argument to perseverance taken from the heavenly nature of the gospel church state, closes the chapter by improving the argument in a manner suitable to the weight of it (v. 25, etc.): *See then that you refuse not him that speaketh*—that speaketh by his blood; and not only speaketh after another manner than the blood of Abel spoke from the ground, but than God spoke by the angels, and by Moses spoke on mount Sinai; then he spoke on earth, now he speaks from heaven. Here observe,

1. When God speaks to men in the most excellent manner he justly expects from them the most strict attention and regard. Now it is in the gospel that God speaks to men in the most excellent manner. For, (1.) He now speaks from a higher and more glorious seat and throne, not from mount Sinai, which was on this earth, but from heaven. (2.) He speaks now more immediately by his inspired word and by his Spirit, which are his witnesses. He speaks not now any new thing to men, but by his Spirit speaks the same word home to the conscience. (3.) He speaks now more powerfully and effectually. Then indeed his voice shook the earth, but now, by introducing the gospel state, he hath shaken not only the earth, but the heavens,—not only shaken the hills and mountains, or the spirits of men, or the civil state of the land of Canaan, to make room for his people,—not only shaken the world, as he then did, but he hath shaken the church, that is, the Jewish nation, and shaken them in their church-state, which was in Old-Testament times a heaven upon earth; this their heavenly spiritual state he hath now shaken. It is by the gospel from heaven that God shook to pieces the civil and ecclesiastical state of the Jewish nation, and introduced a new state of the church, that cannot be removed, shall never be changed for any other on earth, but shall remain till it be made perfect in heaven.

2. When God speaks to men in the most excellent manner, the guilt of those who refuse him is the greater, and their punishment will be more unavoidable and intolerable; there is no escaping, no bearing it, v. 25. The different manner of God's dealing with men under the gospel, in a way of grace, assures us that he will deal with the despisers of the gospel after a different manner than he does with other men, in a way of judgment. The glory of the gospel, which should greatly recommend it to our regard, appears in these three things:—(1.) It was by the sound of the gospel trumpet that the former dispensation and state of the church of God were shaken and removed; and shall we despise that voice of God that pulled down a church and state of so long standing and of God's own building? (2.) It was by the sound of the gospel trumpet that a new kingdom was erected for God in the world, which can never be so shaken as to be removed. This was a change made once for all; no other change shall take place *till time shall be no more*. We have now *received a kingdom that cannot be moved*, shall never be removed, never give way to any new dispensation. The canon of scripture is now perfected, *the Spirit of prophecy has ceased*, the mystery of God is finished, he has put his last hand to it. The gospel church may be made more large, more prosperous more purified from contracted pollution, but it shall never be altered for another dispensation; those who perish under the gospel perish without remedy. And hence the apostle justly concludes, [1.] How necessary it is for us to obtain *grace from God, to serve him acceptably*: if we be not accepted of God under this dispensation, we shall never be accepted at all; and we lose all our labour in religion if we be not accepted of God. [2.] We cannot worship God acceptably, unless we worship him with *godly reverence and fear*. As faith, so holy fear, is necessary to acceptable worship. [3.] It is only the grace of God that enables us to worship God in a right manner: nature cannot come up to it; it can produce neither that precious faith nor that holy fear that is necessary to acceptable worship. [4.] God is the same just and righteous God under the gospel that he appeared to be under the law. Though he be our God in Christ, and now deals with us in a more kind and gracious way, yet he is in himself a consuming fire; that is, a God of strict justice, who will avenge himself on all the despisers of his grace, and upon all apostates. Under the gospel, the justice of God is displayed in a more awful manner, though not in so sensible a manner as under the law; for here we behold divine justice seizing upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and making him a propitiatory sacrifice, his soul and body an offering for sin, which is a display of justice far beyond what was seen and heard on mount Sinai when the law was given.

Chapter 13

The apostle, having treated largely of Christ, and faith, and free grace, and gospel privileges, and warned the Hebrews against apostasy, now, in the close of all, recommends several excellent duties to them, as the proper fruits of faith (v. 1–17); he then bespeaks their prayers for him, and offers up his prayers to God for them, gives them some hope of seeing himself and Timothy, and ends with the general salutation and benediction (v. 18 to the end).

Verses 1-17

The design of Christ in giving himself for us is that he may purchase *to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*. Now the apostle calls the believing Hebrews to the performance of many excellent duties, in which it becomes Christians to excel.

I. To brotherly love (v. 1), by which he does not only mean a general affection to all men, as our brethren by nature, all made of the same blood, nor that more limited affection which is due to those who are of the same immediate parents, but that special and spiritual affection which ought to exist among the children of God. 1. It is here supposed that the Hebrews had this love one for another. Though, at this time, that nation was miserably divided and distracted among themselves, both about matters of religion and the civil state, yet there was true brotherly love left among those of them who believed on Christ; and this appeared in a very eminent manner presently after the shedding forth of the Holy Ghost, when they had all things common, and sold their possessions to make a general fund of subsistence to their brethren. The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of love. Faith works by love. The true religion is the strongest bond of friendship; if it be not so, it has its name for nothing. 2. This brotherly love was in danger of being lost, and that in a time of persecution, when it would be most necessary; it was in danger of being lost by those disputes that were among them concerning the respect they ought still to have to the ceremonies of the Mosaic law. Disputes about religion too often produce a decay of Christian affection; but this must be guarded against, and all proper means used to preserve brotherly love. Christians should always love and live as brethren, and the more they grow in devout affection to God their heavenly Father the more they will grow in love to one another for his sake.

II. To hospitality: *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers for his sake*, v. 2. We must add to brotherly kindness charity. Here observe, 1. The duty required—*to entertain strangers*, both those that are strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to our persons, especially those who know themselves to be strangers here and are seeking another country, which is the case of the people of God, and was so at this time: the believing Jews were in a desperate and distressed condition. But he seems to speak of strangers as such; though we know not who they are, nor whence they come, yet, seeing they are without any certain dwelling place, we should allow them room in our hearts and in our houses, as we have opportunity and ability. 2. The motive: *Thereby some have entertained angels unawares*; so Abraham did (Gen. 18), and Lot (Gen. 19), and one of those that Abraham entertained was the Son of God; and, though we cannot suppose this will ever be our case, yet what we do to strangers, in obedience to him, he will reckon and reward as done to himself. Mt. 25:35, *I was a stranger, and you took me in*. God has often bestowed honours and favours upon his hospitable servants, beyond all their thoughts, *unawares*.

III. To Christian sympathy: *Remember those that are in bonds*, v. 3. Here observe,

1. The duty—to *remember those that are in bonds and in adversity*. (1.) God often orders it so that while some Christians and churches are in adversity others enjoy peace and liberty. All are not called at the same time to resist unto blood. (2.) Those that are themselves at liberty must sympathize with those that are in bonds and adversity, as if they were bound with them in the same chain: they must feel the sufferings of their brethren.

2. The reason of the duty: *As being yourselves in the body*; not only in the body natural, and so liable to the like sufferings, and you should sympathize with them now that others may sympathize with you when your time of trial comes; but in the same mystical body, under the same head, *and if one member suffer all the rest suffer with it*, 1 Co. 12:26. It would be unnatural in Christians not to bear each other's burdens.

IV. To purity and chastity, v. 4. Here you have, 1. A recommendation of God's ordinance of marriage, that it *is honourable in all*, and ought to be so esteemed by all, and not denied to those to whom God has not denied it. It is honourable, for God instituted it for man in paradise, knowing it was not good for him to be alone. He married and blessed the first couple, the first parents of mankind, to direct all to look unto God in that great concern, and to marry in the Lord. Christ honoured marriage with his presence and first miracle. It is honourable as a means to prevent impurity and a defiled bed. It is *honourable* and happy, when persons come together pure and chaste, and preserve the marriage bed undefiled, not only from unlawful but inordinate affections. 2. A dreadful but just censure of impurity and lewdness: *Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*. (1.) God knows who are guilty of such sins, no darkness can hide them from him. (2.) He will call such sins by their proper names, not by the names of love and gallantry, but of whoredom and adultery, whoredom in the single state and adultery in the married state. (3.) He will bring them into judgment, he will judge them, either by their own consciences here, and *set their sins in order before them* for their deep humiliation (and conscience, when awakened, will be very severe upon such sinners), or he will set them at his tribunal at death, and in the last day; he will convict them, condemn them, and cast them out for ever, if they die under the guilt of this sin.

V. To Christian contentment, v. 5, 6. Here observe, 1. The sin that is contrary to this grace and duty—*covetousness*, an over eager desire of the wealth of this world, envying those who have more than we. This sin we must allow no place in our conversation; for, though it be a secret lust lurking in the heart, if it be not subdued it will enter into our conversation, and discover itself in our manner of speaking and acting. We must take care not only to keep this sin down, but to root it out of our souls. 2. The duty and grace that is contrary to covetousness—being satisfied and pleased *with such things as we have*; present things, for past things cannot be recalled, and future things are only in the hand of God. What God gives us from day to day we must be content with, though it fall short of what we have enjoyed heretofore, and though it do not come up to our expectations for the future. We must be content with our present lot. We must bring our minds to our present condition, and this is the sure way to contentment; and those who cannot do it would not be contented though God should raise their condition to their minds, for the mind would rise with the condition. Haman was the great court-favourite, and yet not contented—Ahab on the throne, and yet not contented—Adam in paradise, and yet not contented; yea, the angels in heaven, and yet not contented; but Paul, though abased and empty, had *learned in every state, in any state, therewith to be content*. 3. What reason Christians have to

be contented with their lot. (1.) *God hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, v. 5, 6. This was said to Joshua (ch. 1:5), but belongs to all the faithful servants of God. Old-Testament promises may be applied to New-Testament saints. This promise contains the sum and substance of all the promises. *I will never, no, never leave thee, nor ever forsake thee*. Here are no fewer than five negatives heaped together, to confirm the promise; the true believer shall have the gracious presence of God with him in life, at death, and for ever. (2.) From this comprehensive promise they may assure themselves of help from God: *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do unto me*, v. 6. Men can do nothing against God, and God can make all that men do against his people to turn to their good.

VI. To the duty Christians owe to their ministers, and that both to those that are dead and to those that are yet alive.

1. To those that are dead: *Remember those that have had the rule over you*, v. 7. Here observe,

(1.) The description given of them. They were such as had the rule over them, and had spoken to them the word of God; their guides and governors, who had spoken to them the word of God. Here is the dignity to which they were advanced—to be rulers and leaders of the people, not according to their own will, but the will and word of God; and this character they filled up with suitable duty: they did not rule at a distance, and rule by others, but they ruled by personal presence and instruction, according to the word of God.

(2.) The duties owing to them, even when they were dead.

[1.] *"Remember them*—their preaching, their praying, their private counsel, their example."

[2.] *"Follow their faith*; be stedfast in the profession of the faith they preached to you, and labour after the grace of faith by which they lived and died so well. *Consider the end of their conversation*, how quickly, how comfortably, how joyfully, they finished their course!" Now this duty of following the same true faith in which they had been instructed the apostle enlarges much upon, and presses them earnestly to it, not only from the remembrance of their faithful deceased guides, but from several other motives.

First, From the immutability and eternity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Though their ministers were some dead, others dying, yet the great head and high priest of the church, *the bishop of their souls*, ever lives, and is ever the same; and they should be stedfast and immovable, in imitation of Christ, and should remember that Christ ever lives to observe and reward their faithful adherence to his truths, and to observe and punish their sinful departure from him. Christ is the same in the Old-Testament day, in the gospel day, and will be so to his people for ever.

Secondly, From the nature and tendency of those erroneous doctrines that they were in danger of falling in with.

a. They were divers and various (v. 9), different from what they had received from their former faithful teachers, and inconsistent with themselves.

b. They were strange doctrines: such as the gospel church was unacquainted with foreign to the gospel.

c. They were of an unsettling, distracting nature, like the wind by which the ship is tossed, and in danger of being driven from its anchor, carried away, and split upon the rocks. They were quite contrary to that grace of God which fixes and establishes the heart, which is an excellent thing. These strange doctrines keep the heart always fluctuating and unsettled.

d. They were mean and low as to their subject. They were about external, little, perishing things, such as *meats and drinks*, etc.
e. They were unprofitable. Those who were most taken with them, and employed about them, got no real good by them to their own souls. They did not make them more holy, nor more humble, nor more thankful, nor more heavenly.

f. They would exclude those who embraced them from the privileges of the Christian altar (v. 10): *We have an altar*. This is an argument of the great weight, and therefore the apostle insists the longer upon it. Observe,

(a.) The Christian church has its altar. It was objected against the primitive Christians that their assemblies were destitute of an altar; but this was not true. *We have an altar*, not a material altar, but a personal one, and that is Christ; he is both our altar, and our sacrifice; he sanctifies the gift. The altars under the law were types of Christ; the brazen altar of the sacrifice, the golden altar of his intercession.

(b.) This altar furnishes out a feast for true believers, a feast upon the sacrifice, a *feast of fat things*, spiritual strength and growth, and holy delight and pleasure. The Lord's table is not our altar, but it is furnished with provision from the altar. *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us* (1 Co. 5:7), and it follows, *therefore let us keep the feast*. The Lord's supper is the feast of the gospel passover.

(c.) Those who adhere to the tabernacle or the Levitical dispensation, or return to it again, exclude themselves from the privileges of this altar, from the benefits purchased by Christ. If they serve the tabernacle, they are resolved to subject themselves to antiquated rites and ceremonies, to renounce their right to the Christian altar; and this part of the argument he first proves and then improves.

[a.] He proves that this servile adherence to the Jewish state is a bar to the privileges of the gospel altar; and he argues thus:— Under the Jewish law, no part of the sin-offering was to be eaten, but all must be burnt without the camp while they dwelt in tabernacles, and without the gates when they dwelt in cities: now, if they will still be subject to that law, they cannot eat at the gospel-altar; for that which is eaten there is furnished from Christ, who is the great sin-offering. Not that it is the very sin-offering itself, as the papists affirm; for then it was not to be eaten, but burnt; but the gospel feast is the fruit and procurement of the sacrifice, which those have no right to who do not acknowledge the sacrifice itself. And that it might appear that Christ was really the antitype of the sin-offering, and, as such, might sanctify or cleanse his people with his own blood, he conformed himself to the type, in suffering without the gate. This was a striking specimen of his humiliation, as if he had not been fit either for sacred or civil society! And this shows how sin, which was the meritorious cause of the sufferings of Christ, is a forfeiture of all sacred and civil rights, and the sinner a common plague and nuisance to all society, if God should be strict to mark iniquity. Having thus shown that adherence to the Levitical law would, even according to its own rules, debar men from the Christian altar, he proceeds,

[b.] To improve this argument (v. 13–15) in suitable advices. *First, Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp; go forth from the ceremonial law, from sin, from the world, from ourselves, our very bodies, when he calls us. Secondly, Let us be willing to bear his reproach, be willing to be accounted the offscouring of all things, not worthy to live, not worthy to die a common death. This was his reproach, and we must submit to it; and we have the more reason because, whether we go forth*

from this world to Christ or no, we must necessarily go forth in a little time by death; for *here we have no continuing city*. Sin, sinners, death, will not suffer us to continue long here; and therefore we should go forth now by faith, and seek in Christ the rest and settlement which this world cannot afford us, v. 14. *Thirdly*, Let us make a right use of this altar; not only partake of the privileges of it, but discharge the duties of the altar, as those whom Christ has made priests to attend on this altar. Let us bring our sacrifices to this altar, and to this our high priest, and offer them up by him, v. 15, 16. Now what are the sacrifices which we must bring and offer on this altar, even Christ? Not any expiatory sacrifices; there is no need of them. Christ has offered the great *sacrifice of atonement*, ours are only the sacrifices of acknowledgment; and they are, 1. The sacrifice of praise to God, which we should offer up to God continually. In this are included all adoration and prayer, as well as thanksgiving; this is *the fruit of our lips*; we must speak forth the praises of God from unfeigned lips; and this must be offered only to God, not to angels, nor saints, nor any creature, but to the name of God alone; and it must be by Christ, in a dependence upon his meritorious satisfaction and intercession. 2. The sacrifice of alms-deeds, and Christian charity: *To do good, and to communicate, forget now; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*, v. 16. We must, according to our power, *communicate* to the necessities of the souls and bodies of men; not contenting ourselves to offer the sacrifice of our lips, mere words, but the sacrifice of good deeds; and these we must lay down upon this altar, not depending upon the merit of our good deeds, but of our great high priest; and with such sacrifices as these, adoration and alms thus offered up, God is well pleased; he will accept the offering with pleasure, and will accept and bless the offers through Christ.

2. Having thus told us the duty Christians owe to their deceased ministers, which principally consists in following their faith and not departing from it, the apostle tells us what is the duty that people owe to their living ministers (v. 17) and the reasons of that duty: (1.) The duty-to obey them, and submit themselves to them. It is not an implicit obedience, or absolute submission, that is here required, but only so far as is agreeable to the mind and will of God revealed in his word; and yet it is truly obedience and submission, and that not only to God, but to the authority of the ministerial office, which is of God as certainly, in all things belonging to that office, as the authority of parents or of civil magistrates in the things within their sphere. Christians must submit to be instructed by their ministers, and not think themselves too wise, too good, or too great, to learn from them; and, when they find that ministerial instructions are agreeable to the written word, they must obey them. (2.) The motives to this duty. [1.] They have the rule over the people; their office, though not magisterial, yet is truly authoritative. They have no authority to lord it over the people, but to lead them in the ways of God, by informing and instructing them, explaining the word of God to them, and applying it to their several cases. They are not to make laws of their own, but to interpret the laws of God; nor is their interpretation to be immediately received without examination, but the people must search the scriptures, and so far as the instructions of their minister are according to that rule they ought to receive them, *not as the word of men, but, as they are indeed, the word of God, that works effectually in those that believe*. [2.] They watch for the souls of the people, not to ensnare them, but to save them; to gain them, not to themselves, but to Christ; to build them up in knowledge, faith, and holiness. They are to watch against every thing that may be hurtful to the souls of men, and to give them warning of dangerous errors, of the devices of Satan, of approaching judgments; they are to watch for all opportunities of

helping the souls of men forward in the way to heaven. [3.] They must give an account how they have discharged their duty, and what has become of the souls committed to their trust, whether any have been lost through their neglect, and whether any of them have been brought in and built up under their ministry. [4.] They would be glad to give a good account of themselves and their hearers. If they can then give in an account of their own fidelity and success, it will be a joyful day to them; those souls that have been converted and confirmed under their ministry *will be their joy, and their crown, in the day of the Lord Jesus*. [5.] If they give up their account with grief, it will be the people's loss as well as theirs. It is the interest of hearers that the account their ministers give of them may be with joy, and not with grief. If faithful ministers be not successful, the grief will be theirs, but the loss will be the people's. Faithful ministers have delivered their own souls, but a fruitless and faithless people's blood and ruin will be upon their own heads.

Verses 18-25

Here, I. The apostle recommends himself, and his fellow-sufferers, to the prayers of the Hebrew believers (v. 18): "*Pray for us; for me and Timothy*" (mentioned v. 23), "and for all those of us who labour in the ministry of the gospel."

1. This is one part of the duty which people owe to their ministers. Ministers need the prayers of the people; and the more earnestly the people pray for their ministers the more benefit they may expect to reap from their ministry. They should pray that God would teach those who are to teach them, that he would make them vigilant, and wise, and zealous, and successful—that he would assist them in all their labours, support them under all their burdens, and strengthen them under all their temptations.

2. There are good reasons why people should pray for their ministers; he mentions two:—

(1.) *We trust we have a good conscience*, etc., v. 18. Many of the Jews had a bad opinion of Paul, because he, being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, had cast off the Levitical law and preached up Christ: now he here modestly asserts his own integrity: *We trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly*. *We trust!* he might have said, *We know*; but he chose to speak in a humble style, to teach us all not to be too confident of ourselves, but to maintain a godly jealousy over our own hearts.

"*We trust we have a good conscience*, an enlightened and well-informed conscience, a clean and pure conscience, a tender and faithful conscience, a conscience testifying for us, not against us: a good conscience *in all things*, in the duties both of the first and second table, towards God and towards men, and especially in all things pertaining to our ministry; we would act honestly and sincerely in all things." Observe, [1.] A good conscience has a respect to all God's commands and all our duty. [2.] Those who have this good conscience, yet need the prayers of others. [3.] Conscientious ministers are public blessings, and deserve the prayers of the people.

(2.) Another reason why he desires their prayers is that he hoped thereby to be the sooner restored to them (v. 19), intimating that he had been formerly among them,—that, now he was absent from them, he had a great desire and real intention to come again to them,—and that the best way to facilitate his return to them, and to make it a mercy to him and them, was to make it a matter of their prayer. When ministers come to a people as a return of prayer, they come with greater satisfaction to themselves and success to the people. We should fetch in all our mercies by prayer.

II. He offers up his prayers to God for them, being willing to do for them as he desired they should do for him: *Now the God of peace*, etc., v. 20. In this excellent prayer observe, 1. The title given to God—*the God of peace*, who was found out a way for peace and reconciliation between himself and sinners, and who loves peace on earth and especially in his churches. 2. The great work ascribed to him: *He hath brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus*, etc. Jesus raised himself by his own power; and yet the Father was concerned in it, attesting thereby that justice was satisfied and the law fulfilled. He rose again for our justification; and that divine power by which he was raised is able to do every thing for us that we stand in need of. 3. The titles given to Christ—our Lord Jesus, our sovereign, our Saviour, and the great shepherd of the sheep, promised in Isa. 40:11, declared by himself to be so, Jn. 10:14, 15. Ministers are under-shepherds, Christ is the great shepherd. This denotes his interest in his people. They are the flock of his pasture, and his care and concern are for them. He feeds them, and leads them, and watches over them. 4. The way and method in which God is reconciled, and Christ raised from the dead: *Through the blood of the everlasting covenant*. The blood of Christ satisfied divine justice, and so procured Christ's release from the prison of the grace, as having paid our debt, according to an eternal covenant or agreement between the Father and the Son; and this blood is the sanction and seal of an everlasting covenant between God and his people. 5. The mercy prayed for: *Make you perfect in every good work*, etc., v. 21. Observe, (1.) The perfection of the saints in every good work is the great thing desired by them and for them, that they may here have a perfection of integrity, a clear mind, a clean heart, lively affections, regular and resolved wills, and suitable strength for every good work to which they are called now, and at length a perfection of degrees to fit them for the employment and felicity of heaven. (2.) The way in which God makes his people perfect; it is by working in them always what is pleasing in his sight, and that *through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever*. Observe, [1.] There is no good thing wrought in us but it is the work of God; he works in us, before we are fit for any good work. [2.] No good thing is wrought in us by God, but through Jesus Christ, for his sake and by his Spirit. And therefore, [3.] Eternal glory is due to him, who is the cause of all the good principles wrought in us and all the good works done by us. To this every one should say, *Amen*.

III. He gives the Hebrews an account of Timothy's liberty and his hopes of seeing them with him in a little time, v. 23. It seems, Timothy had been a prisoner, doubtless for the gospel, but now he was set at liberty. The imprisonment of faithful ministers is an honour to them, and their enlargement is matter of joy to the people. He was pleased with the hopes of not only seeing Timothy, but seeing the Hebrews with him. Opportunities of writing to the churches of Christ are desired by the faithful ministers of Christ, and pleasant to them.

IV. Having given a brief account of this his letter, and begged their attention to it (v. 22), he closes with salutations, and a solemn, though short benediction.

1. The salutation. (1.) From himself to them, directed to all their ministers who had rule over them, and to all the saints; to them all, ministers and people. (2.) From the Christians in Italy to them. It is a good thing to have the law of holy love and kindness written in the hearts of Christians one towards another. Religion teaches men the truest civility and good-breeding. It is not a sour nor morose thing.

2. The solemn, though short benediction (v. 25): *Grace be with you all. Amen.* Let the favour of God be towards you, and his grace continually working in you, and with you, bringing forth the fruits of holiness, as the first-fruits of glory. When the people of God have been conversing together by word or writing, it is good to part with prayer, desiring for each other the continuance of the gracious presence of God, that they may meet together again in the world of praise.