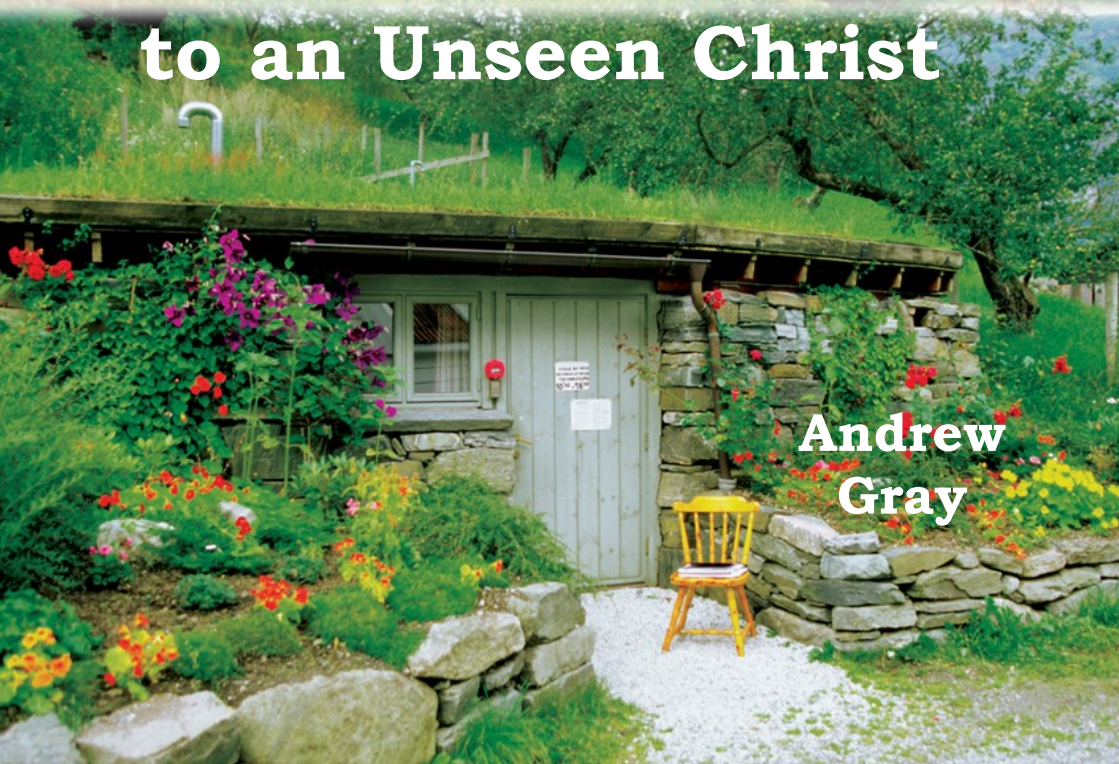




Sermon

**The Believer's Love
to an Unseen Christ**



**Andrew
Gray**

Sermons ‘The Believer’s Love to an Unseen Christ’ and ‘For Jesus Christ is Precious to Believers’

Andrew Gray

The Believer’s Love to an Unseen Christ

“Who having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory” 1 Peter 1:8.

Amongst all the debates and controversies in these days, this is without all debate and controversy, that godliness is a great mystery; and we conceive that it were your advantage to take up a mystery in it. We think the truths of the gospel are not only mysteries to our judgments, but much more mysteries to our practices. We conceive they are so elevated above sense and reason, that these depths of the gospel are not easily taken up. A natural man, who, in things human, hath his knowledge and understanding enlarged as the sand by the sea-shore, who hath attained unto an eminent pitch of knowledge of things natural and moral, above even those that are endued with a more divine light in things that are more sublime in their nature and useful in their knowledge; yet bring him to search out the mysterious truths in the gospel, and there he is as an infant of days, and without understanding in these things, they being spiritually discerned.

O what a mystery it is, for flesh and blood to love Him whom they never saw. The first words of our text are a riddle which we cannot take up, to love an invisible object, but he that is spiritually enlightened, to embrace that precious object Jesus Christ, by these two glorious arms, faith and love, can easily unfold it. Though He be now entered into the holiest of all, and is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and exalted out of our sight; yet faith doth travail above the clouds, to embrace and encircle that invisible object, whose name is Immanuel.

There are two great riddles and mysteries in the words which we have read, which, though a natural man had seven days to unfold them, he should be as wise at the close of these seven days, as he was at the beginning, these mysteries being above his sense and

experience. O what a mystery is this, for a natural man to see Christians exercising themselves in the grace of love, about Him whom they never saw, and to be beholding Him whose bodily face they never did behold! This holds forth, no doubt, that divine and sublime acting of a Christian soul that is elevated above sense, and all outward appearance. That glorious and excellent piece the soul of man, which is of a divine offspring, deriving its generation from the Ancient of Days and that which must return unto Him again, God being the first immediate cause, and last immediate end of this noble piece of the creation. What subtle abstraction and divine speculation will it have upon every subject? Yea more, it will be raised up by an attractive virtue of an eminent object, to exercise eminent acts of love and joy, as here we may see in the words. O that we were persuaded to be more in the exercise of that first and great commandment, "To love the Lord your God with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your heart, and with all your mind."

Did you ever see Him? It were impossible for you but to love Him, if once ye had beheld Him: but, however, though ye see Him not, yet love Him; it is no blind bargain to take Christ upon implicit faith. O when had ye such a glorious and excellent discovery of that noble Plant of Renown, that ye were content to take Him alone, though He should bring none of these great and comprehensive donations that He used to give unto His own? If such a supposition had been possible, ye would have condescended rather to be in hell with Christ, than to be in heaven without Him, as one piously once spake. O but want of the exercise of the grace of love is a great want. Other sins have slain their thousands; but, no doubt, this sin hath slain its ten thousands. O, when shall Christ have dominion, and sit as king in the temple of our hearts. commanding the powers and faculties of our souls, saying to one, Go and it goeth; and to another, Do this, and it doeth it. What conceive ye could be the reason that moved Christians, in primitive times, so closely to adhere to the owning of a crucified Christ, though not seen, that all torments imaginable could not break these precious cords of love and faith? They were

twisted about by an unseen Christ; They loved not their lives unto the death — the bonds of their afflictions could not break these precious bonds of love. And no doubt they received that precious reward, though their souls went up in the flame of that sacrifice, which they offered up to God, by giving their bodies to be burnt; and they went to heaven in a fiery chariot, and are now resting above the reach and noise of all these toils and miseries wherewith we are now encompassed. They have spent more than a thousand years in that blessed contemplation of Him whom they did not see while they were here below, and yet they love Him; but now they both see Him and love Him.

We shall come and speak a little more particularly to the words. You have in them the apostle Peter setting forth the excellency of these two cardinal graces, from the object about which they were exercised which was Christ not seen; that in wise and glorious Majesty, “Whom having not seen, yet we love:” where there is a sweet emphasis in that word yet, that notwithstanding the love was at such a disadvantage, as not to see Him, yet love overcame it; and the object of faith likewise is Christ not seen, in “whom, though ye see Him not, yet believe.”

He doth commend these two graces from that precious fruit and effect which they had accompanying them, that it made the Christian “to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory,” that is, with joy that could not be made language of; the most divine orator could not tell what this joy was. As likewise, it is a “joy full of glory,” which we do conceive doth point at the constancy of that joy that floweth to a Christian, from the exercise of faith and love about this invisible object; and where these two are joined and knit together, unspeakable joy and permanent delight, what do they lack? These are those two sweet flowers that flow and spring out from the root of faith and love, permanent joy and unspeakable delight; and these shall remain eternally green throughout all the ages of long eternity.

And we shall only say this by the way, that if the joy of a Christian, while he is here below, be a joy unspeakable and full of glory, what must that joy be that saints that are now made perfect

have, in the immediate contemplation of Jesus Christ? If the love of Christ not seen did produce such precious effects, how much more now when they are admitted to the immediate beholding of Him, shall they rejoice? And if ye would ask the name of that joy that the souls of just men now made perfect have with God, we would give it in no term so suitable as this, it is a joy without a name, it is a nameless joy; not because it is not, but because it is what it is. And we are persuaded that if ye had liberty granted unto you to possess or propose this question to any who are now above, what is now your joy that ye have in Christ now seen? I believe they would give you no other answer but that which is in 1 Cor. 2:9, where the apostle Paul, by an excellent gradation, doth hold forth the excellency of that blessed and glorious estate of life that the saints have while they are above, when he says, The eye, that most comprehensive sense, that can take up many various and different objects, and can see such things at a distance; yet it cannot take up nor behold the invisible glory of that estate of life: yea more, the ear, that is a more comprehensive sense than the eye, cannot take up the blessedness of that estate; for the “ear (says the apostle) hath not heard;” yea, the mind of man, which is more comprehensive than the eye or the ear, and can take up many more things than both the eye and the ear, which can in one moment of time run through all the four cardinal points of heaven, west, east, north and south; “yet it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive,” and understand that blessed and glorious estate of life. Sense and fruition shall best resolve that question, and we must delay the answer of it till we shall have the enjoyment of it; but ye may know what these upper springs must be, since the lower springs are such. If a Christian doth rejoice here below “with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” O how shall they rejoice in Him, when all these veils that are betwixt Christ and them shall be rent from the top to the bottom?

We shall not stand long in debating this, why love here doth get the precedency and first place of faith. We think indeed faith is first in order to the begetting of love in the heart, and that which goeth forth and discovereth the invisible things of God; and love

sits down and solaces itself in the discoveries of faith. Faith cries forth, it is good for us to be here, and love cries forth, let us make tabernacles here; but we shall not speak upon the priorities of the graces of the Spirit. Sure we are, the Spirit of grace doth keep a divine and wise method, in putting one line of scripture before another, though oft times we be ignorant of the causes of it; neither shall we stand long in speaking of this unto you, that divine and pleasant confession that is betwixt these two graces, love and faith, how each one of these doth help another in their exercise. We think the grace of faith does only help the grace of love in its exercise, in this respect, that it doth discover unto love, objects for it to exercise itself about. Faith is that discerning and comprehensive grace of the Christian, which taketh up most of God; it discovers the invisible things of God unto the Christian; and love is then provoked to exercise by the large and spiritual discoveries of faith.

First. Faith doth likewise help love in this, that when we meet with some sad and anxious dispensation, then our love begins to call in question, and debate the reality of His good-will, not knowing how to reconcile these two together, His good-will and His dispensations. I say, faith there doth eminently help love. Faith can read the thoughts of His heart and can behold His countenance under a vail, that though He seems to frown, yet He loveth. We confess, these characters, by which love is engraven upon a sad and anxious dispensation, are not easily read: it is only faith that can read them.

Secondly. Faith doth likewise help love in this, that it doth discover unto the Christian the accomplishment of the most Precious and excellent promises that are given unto it, which doth provoke the Christian eminently to love Him, who hath given unto them such precious and excellent promises, by which we are made partakers of His divine nature. I conceive, if once Christians could attain to such a length, as to behold the accomplishment of all these promises that are given to it in scripture, they could not be but constrained to have their spirits breathing after Him. O what a divine necessity should that impose upon our spirits to

love Him, who hath thus loved us?

Thirdly. Faith doth likewise help love in this respect, that it goes to Jesus Christ, upon whom our strength is laid, and does draw strength and furniture from Him, for the exercising of all the graces of the Spirit. And, we conceive, that love doth help faith in some respect; for the apostle Paul, Gal. 5:6, says, “Faith worketh by love:” yea, it is impossible for the Christian to be in the divine exercise of faith, and not to be in the exercise of love. When love is in exercise, then faith doth increase with the increase of God. I confess, the languishing of the grace of love, maketh faith to groan within us, with the groanings of a deadly wounded man: then keep love in exercise, and ye shall keep faith also in exercise; and more we may say, keep faith in exercise, and ye shall likewise keep the grace of love in exercise.

Now that which we intended to speak upon at this time to you is, upon the first ground and consideration, from which the apostle Peter doth commend these two graces, which is this — That they act and exercise themselves about an invisible object, a Christ not seen. And, we conceive, this expression, “Whom having not seen, ye love,” doth (not only) hold forth that they did exercise the grace of love, notwithstanding the want of His bodily presence, which, we conceive, is the plain and obvious meaning of this place. We confess the eye is the serious messenger of the mind, as likewise it hath very great influence upon the affections. And herein their love was excellent, that notwithstanding the want of His bodily presence, yet they did love Him; though they had not known Christ, and Him crucified, according to the flesh, yet their souls were bound to this spiritual object by a three-fold cord, which is not easily broken. This doth likewise hold out that they did not, in their exercise of love, seek for an eminent and sensible discovery of the divine power of Christ, in some miracle and extraordinary thing; their love was more modest and sober than to seek a sign and miracle to maintain it: they would clasp about an unseen Christ, notwithstanding the want of these discoveries.

We think likewise it holds out this. That they did exercise love about Christ unseen, even in the sensible and gracious

declarations of His presence and favour towards them; that though He did sometimes turn about the face of His throne, and veil Himself with a cloud, and so was not seen in this respect, yet they did love Him. It is, no doubt, the eminent commendation of a Christian that, let Christ alter His dispensations as He will towards them, they will never alter in the exercise of love: let Him frown, yet be persuaded to love. This was the exercise of the spouse, Song 3, where under all her anxious disappointments that she meets with in her pursuit after Christ, yet four times she gives Him that glorious style, and loving epithet, “Him whom my soul loveth.” A Christian hath no will to injure the noble object of His love, even so much as to call in question the reality of His love, because of His dispensations. This, we doubt not, is an eminent act of love, to love an over-clouded Christ, when wrath seemeth to look out at His eyes, and when He hath put on a change of apparel, coming with dyed garments of blood towards you.

And we think, lastly, this phrase, “Whom having not seen, ye love,” holds forth this — That Christ, in all our enjoyments we have of Him while we are here below, on this side of time, we may engrave that inscription upon them, This is not Christ seen, but Christ looking through at the lattice. And in this respect, we do but enjoy an unseen Christ, in respect of that complete and immediate fruition of Him, which those that are begotten unto a lively hope shall once have, in the immediate contemplation of Him, O what a sight shall that be, when your eyes shall be admitted to behold the King in His beauty! I confess, it is impossible to determine what joy a Christian shall have in that day, when he shall receive the first immediate sight of God. In a manner, all your enjoyments that formerly you have had, shall then appear as nothing to the soul; your soul shall be wrapt up in a holy admiration of such an enjoyment. O blessed are those eternally who are living in the lively expectation and hope of such a day: then He whom ye see not here, yet afterward ye shall see Him.

We shall speak to some considerations that do commend the exercise of the grace of love about Christ not seen, and this

invisible object. I am afraid that we are a barbarian to the most part of you, and speaking in an unknown tongue, when we speak of the exercise of love about Christ not seen, and this invisible object.

The first consideration by which we commend the grace of love acting about this object is this — That act of the Christian is most permanent and durable. If your love to Jesus Christ be only when you see Him, certainly your love cannot long endure; and, I confess, it doth not deserve much thanks, such love as that, who would not love Him unless they do behold Him. Christ, who was the head, did remove from the members, He knowing how prone we were to idolize His bodily presence; therefore He saith, John 16:7, “It is expedient for you that I go away.” He went up, thinking it was best to remove, and not to let us have the enjoyment of His bodily presence, till that blessed day shall be, which we desire to believe is not far off, when we shall have the enjoyment of His bodily presence, and shall not be in hazard to idolize Him; though we confess Christ (so to speak) is the most suitable and divine idol for a Christian soul to have. But, however, that love is most divine and pure that hath its rise not from outward sense and appearance; it is the soul (as it were) closing both door and window, and retiring into the inner-room of divine contemplation and solacing itself with the sweet and desirable thoughts of Christ not seen; it is the soul of a Christian in a composed and divine frame, studying to have his love taking fire, in beholding Him who is far off, that he may meditate upon Him till he love, and love till he wonder, and wonder till he rejoice.

There is a second consideration by which, we think, the grace of love acting itself as about an invisible object, and Christ not seen is made commendable and eminent, and it is this. Love that is thus exercised, is most contrary to our inclination and humour. It is the natural disposition of all to love sense and sensible things, to have our eyes and our hands teaching us; and, no doubt, it must be an eminently attractive virtue of an invisible object, to make this impetuous current of our natural inclinations to turn back, and

to provoke us to exercise love about that which we have not seen. We think Satan knew well what a prone desire men have to sense and sensible things, who hath brought down those things; therefore his precepts about the worshipping of idols and graven images, have been so well taken off his hand. We think the way of our worshipping God by sensible types and signs, and figures under the law, had more near affiance and likeness to our nature, than that pure and spiritual way of the gospel, and of loving Jesus Christ, now in the fullness of time. It is one of the most eminent contradictions of our natural inclinations and humour, to love an invisible object, and Christ yet not seen.

The third consideration that does commend the grace of love acting itself about this invisible object is this, it is a love that is most pure and divine. We think our love that hath its rise from outward sense and appearance hath most mud and dreg at the bottom of it. It was, no doubt, a blessed dispensation to Him; but herein is the eminency of the grace of love much manifested, to love Christ when He is under a vail, or when He is not seen. it is certain, that we cannot long persist in the exercise of love, if our love do flow and ebb, according as His dispensations do. O, to be kissing and loving the veil, or an absent Christ, when we are not admitted to behold His face! That our souls might be always breathing after an immediate conjunction and divine union betwixt our souls and Him. I think that which we speak in schools is eminently verified of a Christian, 'the soul of a Christian is more where it loves than where it lives.' We think the soul is acting in its proper element and sphere when it is breathing out love upon Jesus Christ not seen, or this invisible object. O but this is a mystery to many of us. Our love is full of jealousies when His dispensations do not suit our humour. I think if Christ were as changeable as we are in the exercise of love, that contract of marriage that is between Him and us should soon be rent! But, O, blessed are changeable creatures in this, that they have to do with an unchangeable Christ, whose love doth admit of no variableness, nor shadow of change! O! who could ever engrave that imputation upon that living and gracious Person, that He

changed? He keeps His grip on us, when we lose our grip of Him.

There is a fourth consideration by which we do commend the grace of love acting itself upon an invisible object, Christ not seen, and it is this. It is a love that does not rise upon any outward motive, or extrinsical consideration; it is a love rising from the exercise of a gracious frame of spirit, as the result of that union betwixt the head and the members: it would have Him, although, as long as it is within time, it never did behold Him. A Christian that is thus in the exercise of love, if he have the promise of the eternal enjoyment of Him, it will suspend all these things, if it seem so fit, (I mean all those enjoyments) till it be exalted above the reach of all diversion and interruption of that blessed fellowship. It will grant, (so to speak), an indulgence to our blessed Lord Jesus to be arbitrary in the dispensation of love, if so be that once he be persuaded that his Beloved is his, and that he is His. Ye know that the members ought to love the head; it is a conjugal motion and it is most suitable and proper. Now love that hath its rise from this union, and not from an extrinsical consideration, no doubt, it is most eminent and excellent.

There is a fifth consideration which may commend the grace of love acting itself about that invisible object, Christ not seen, and it is this. The grace of love can never be brought to perfection, till once we be brought to this, to love Christ yet not seen, this invisible object. I think that which makes love to be under such a woeful and remarkable decay, even in the most serious and exercised Christians, is this, that when Christ is veiled, and they do not behold Him, their love begins to decay and languish. Believe it, if your love be not exercised when He is away and absent from you, as well as when He is present, and condescendeth to manifest Himself unto you, it is certain your love can never increase with the increase of God.

There is this last consideration that we would propose unto you, which may commend the grace of love to an invisible object, Christ not seen, and it is this. It is that love which maketh the Christian to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. O this is a paradox, and mystery unto many of the Christians of this

generation, that the loving of Christ not seen should make them thus rejoice, even with joy unspeakable and full of glory. If the words of our text had run thus, “Whom seeing ye love,” and then, “Rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” no doubt ye might then have closed with it. Now certainly here is a mystery, that the exercise of the grace of love on Christ not seen, should make the Christian thus exceedingly to rejoice; and it is certain, that when a Christian wins to exercise love under absence with Christ, that love is most eminent and most complete. It is impossible to determine what strange and most inexpressible actings of the grace of love a Christian doth receive sometimes, when he is exercising this grace and duty of love in Christ not seen, and this invisible object.

Now we shall only from this press this upon you, that ye may once be persuaded to confine your love and all your desires upon Him. O Christians, love Him, though He be in a far country; for it is not long before ye shall see Him. That is the sweet period and result of the sweet exercise of the grace of love about that invisible object, Christ not seen; for ye may comfort yourselves in this, that shortly, ere it be long, it shall be your eternal exercise about the throne, ever to love Christ seen, and shall also enjoy Christ seen; and may not that provoke you, while ye are here, even to love that invisible object and unseen Christ? O let your love always be travelling above in that higher land, and embracing Him whom (we conceive) ought to be the object of all your loves. O are there not many here among us who never knew what it was to exercise love upon this precious object, Jesus Christ? O be persuaded of it, that the day is coming and is not far off, when He, even He whom ye would not love, shall tear you in pieces, when there shall be none to deliver you out of His hands; when ye shall see Him coming, with ten thousands of His saints, to take revenge upon those who would not obey the voice of His gospel. Believe it, ye shall then, with all the families of the earth, mourn for Him whom ye have pierced, and make bitter lamentation, as one for their only son. This day we do, as the ambassadors and messengers of Christ, once intreat you to love

this blessed Object; and if ye deny this desire and command of His to you, it shall once be the matter of your eternal anxiety and torment, that ye were invited to love Him, but ye would not. I say, the day is approaching and drawing near, when ye would be content to love Him, but then He will not be loved by you; and no doubt it is a suitable retaliation from that person, that if ye will not love Him while ye are here below, when ye would love Him elsewhere, He will deny your desire unto you.

We shall likewise speak a word to the commendation of this grace of faith, upon this same account. That it is exercised about Christ not seen, and that invisible object. We think the grace of love and the grace of faith are indeed different in their habits, but are hardly distinguished in their exercise. All the graces of the Spirit are so inseparable and interwoven one with another, that when one grace acteth, all the other graces seem to move; they are like unto these wheels in a clock, which, at the motion of the upper-wheel, all the lower wheels seem to move; and certainly, it doth most clearly hold in the exercise of these two graces, faith and love, they are inseparable twins. These graces are pleasant in their lives, and in their death they are not divided.

Now the apostle doth here point out faith, not only in its nature and properties, but even in its object. In its nature, faith is here pointed forth, that it doth discover these invisible things of God, and it is the evidence of things not seen, as likewise the substance, or rather the subsistence of things hoped for; faith giveth a life and being to things before they be, and brings them near to the Christian's eye, even while they are far off. O Christians, be much in the exercise of the grace of faith, even about things that are not seen; for believe it, ere long, faith shall die and vanish out into the exercise of the grace of love, and love shall be your inseparable companion in heaven, for there ye shall both love and be loved eternally, even without all intermission.

Now the object of love is here set down and that is, even Christ not seen, or bodily enjoyed: and we shall shortly point at some things by which the grace of faith may be kept in exercise, when

ye meet with such a dispensation as this, to have Christ not seen unto you, and when He is vailing Himself from your eyes, and is, as it were, casting at you.

The first thing that we would give as a help to a Christian to keep his faith in exercise, and to exercise it in this estate, is this, look upon all these disadvantages and impediments that ye have in the exercise of the grace of your faith, as opportunities and occasions given unto you to glorify God; and that will help to keep your faith in exercise. When faith hath the most impediments in the way, then there is the greatest occasion given for us to glorify Him, by being strong in the faith: and, to say it by the way, faith is never in its native exercise, till sense and reason contradict the accomplishment of the promises. Faith then is put to be deeply exercised and is in its native place; and know this, that the most adventurous acts of faith have had the most sweet and precious out-gates. Now, I say, though all his dispensations that we meet with, should be impediments and disadvantages to your sense and uptakings, for you to exercise the grace of faith, yet do not, because of these impediments and seeming disadvantages, desist from the exercise of these graces. I think a Christian hath then a most spiritual view of all these impediments and obstructions that are laid in the way, in order to the exercising of the grace of faith, when he looketh upon these impediments and obstructions as occasions given unto him, whereby he may glorify God.

There is this second consideration, or second help, which we would give to one that would exercise the grace of faith in such a case, and under such a dispensation, when Christ is veiled and is hid from your eyes, and it is this — to look upon all these difficulties and improbabilities, that are in the way of the accomplishment of any promise, as commands given unto you to exercise faith. Look upon all your difficulties, whatsoever, as so many voices, proclaiming aloud this duty unto you — Believe in God, and in His Son Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent into the world. This was the practice and divinity of this holy man David, in Psalm 56:3, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.” He

thought no time so suitable for the exercising of the grace of hope as then, when he was encompassed with difficulties; and we think it altogether impossible for a Christian to exercise the grace of faith upon Christ not seen, except he look upon all these improbabilities and difficulties that lie in his way for the exercising of his faith, as exhortations and commands given unto him to believe, and adhere more strongly unto God.

There is this third consideration, or help, for a Christian to exercise the grace of faith upon Jesus Christ absent and not seen, that invisible object, and it is this — Be much in the consideration of the unalterableness and unchangeableness of God; that He is the same yesterday, and today, and forever; that though He may alter His dispensations, yet ye may be persuaded of it, that He cannot alter His love toward you; for as He is, so is His love; and He is unchangeable, therefore His love must be unchangeable also, even according as He is in Himself.

Now, we shall shut up our discourse at this time with this, desiring that those precious and excellent mysteries, which, no doubt, are hid from the eyes of many of this generation, to exercise those two spiritual and noble graces, faith and love, about an unseen and invisible object, that ye may once be prevailed with to set about that blessed exercise. We shall speak nothing to the encouragements that are proposed to these that set about this blessed and divine exercise; only I say, they do “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” O Christians, would ye know the most fit and compendious way for one to obtain delight and perfect satisfaction? Then be much in the exercise of these two excellent graces, faith and love. O but the grace of faith will furnish much matter of joy and consolation unto the Christian, when all things that are here below seem to be threatening ruin and destruction, when the foundations of the world are out of course, and when all things seem to be over turning; surely I would give the Christian no better counsel or advice than this, by the grace of faith and love, be settling yourselves even upon this invisible object not seen.

Certainly it is a great mystery to the men of the world, to see

Christians rejoicing in the midst of all their straits and anxieties, to see them always flourishing and green under the saddest and most crushing dispensations that they meet with. But here, no doubt, is the Christian's life. He who is planted by that living fountain and well of life, shall be a branch that shall spring over the wall. I confess, if a Christian complain of the want of joy and delight in God, ye may reduce it to this cause, want of the exercise of the grace of faith in Jesus Christ not seen, this invisible object. Believe it, ye may have your treasure kept safe, when all other things may be robbed and taken from you. I think that which once a philosopher spake, when the city wherein he dwelt was robbed and spoiled, being asked that question, if he had lost anything, answered thus, "That all that he had, he carried about with him,"

I think a Christian may keep all his treasures within him, and may be free from the robbery and spoil of the men of the world. This is a treasure which does not admit of any sequestration, neither can it at all be exposed unto theft. O make it your own by the grace of faith and delight yourselves in Christ as your own in love. Let love rejoice in Christ appropriate unto you. I shall say no more, but only this. We need not commend Christ to those that know Him, but we are certain that all that we can speak to the commendation of Him is infinitely below that which He is. Therefore, O come and see this precious invisible object, Jesus Christ, and it will best resolve this question concerning His excellency. The angels and the souls of just men made perfect did never behold such an one. His countenance is like Lebanon, and excellent as the cedars. Now to Him who is love itself, and who only must persuade us to love Him, even to this precious object, we desire to give praise. Amen.

For Jesus Christ is Precious to Believers

"Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious" 1 Peter 2:7.

Such is the universal stupidity and hardness of heart that has

overtaken the people of this generation, that if Christ should come from heaven, as being there glorified with majesty, and should invite us to partake of that promised land, there are that would stop their ears, as with their finger, lest they should be overcome and led captive there, and lest they should be charmed with the enchanting voice of that blessed charmer. We shall say to these that sell Christ at so low a rate, that word, Lev. 13:46, "All the days wherein the plague shall be in them, they shall be defiled; they are unclean; they shall dwell alone, without the camp shall their habitation be." When we consider the contrary practice that is betwixt the higher house and the lower house, how may we blush and be ashamed! The practice of the higher house is still to be singing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts;" our practice in this lower house is to undervalue Him. The reproaching of Him should be our complaint. If prayer could be exercised in heaven, the first prayer that we would put up when our feet were within the New Jerusalem would be, O precious Christ, pardon our undervaluings of Thee while we were below.

Have ye never been constrained to say, Who can show forth His Praise? David summoned all the angels in heaven, the souls of men, sun, moon, stars, beasts, birds, etc., to shew forth His praise. Did ye never know what it was to be convinced of the remissness of that duty, and the coldness of your love? The love of Christ involves an everlasting obligation on angels to praise Him. The grace of love in a Christian is under a twofold sweet mistake; it conceives every hour's absence from Christ to be an eternity, and an eternal presence to be but an hour. "How long wilt Thou Forget me, O Lord, for ever?" says David. And if we may allude unto these words, Psalm 90:4, "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday." You have in the words a Christian described. He has a dignity that is of more value than if he did derive his pedigree from a thousand kings, without an interrupted line. The word "therefore" in the text relates to the preceding verse.

There be two sweet proofs and advantages of faith that make Christ precious to the believer; it is not said unto you He was precious. It is said He is precious. There is a relative preciousness

of Christ; it is to the believer He is precious; yet although ye be not a believer, it is bad divinity to conclude that ye are not within the compass of the decree of election. Christ's preciousness to the believer is the foundation of our faith.

I shall not dwell long on this excellent and royal dignity of a Christian, only there is that one excellency, faith keeps a soul in most constant communion with Christ; Eph. 3:17, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." By the exercise of the grace of faith Christ becomes our husband, our householder, and indweller with us. It is a most sweet and desirable thing to have Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, and our souls dwelling with Christ by love; that is a sweet connection. Faith renders Christ more precious to a Christian than sense. This may be shown from faith's estimation of Christ; it is built on His person. Sense looks to Christ's feet and hands, and His outward parts, but faith looks to His person. Faith looks to what Christ was before the world began, or a cornerstone thereof was laid; sense alone looks to what Christ is at the present time. The grace of faith looks to the love that is in Christ's heart: sense alone looks to the smiles of His face. The estimation of faith is more constant than the estimation of sense; when Christ withdraws, sense loses its opinion. When faith would have wisdom, it consults with Christ, whose name is Wonderful. Counsellor. Faith is as a sinew, that being cut, all our strength goes from us. Faith is an heroic grace; the crown of martyrdom is set upon the head of faith. A Christian that is under the excellency of this grace, is a most humble Christian.

By what law was boasting excluded? By the law of faith. Paul presseth this doctrine upon a Christian. Faith discovers to a Christian the excellency of God, and makes him take up his dwelling in the dust. Faith makes a Christian to have two contrary motions, one to ascend, another to descend, so to speak; it keeps all the graces of the Spirit in motion. Faith is the messenger of the soul, and discovers what Christ is; who being discovered, faith cries out, "It is good for me to be here," and then love cries out, "Let us make a tabernacle." Faith likewise mortifies corruption.

Faith has a sweet influence on the work of mortification in a Christian. When Christ is discovered to a soul, it will cast away its idols as a menstrous cloth, and will cry out, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" The soul is more where it loseth than where it liveth. Being justified by faith, we glory in tribulation. Faith holds out the crown on the right hand to a Christian, having this motto written on it, "He that persevereth to the end shall be saved." Moses was never at patience till he was at the top of the mount, where he did see the promised land. Faith makes out the promises to a Christian. Faith is a life-sanctifying grace. When faith goes abroad in the world, good works are the handmaids that accompany the queen. Faith has Rachel's eye and Leah's womb. Faith has a sweet influence on our fruitfulness to Christ; John 15:5, "He that abideth in Me, the same bringeth forth much fruit." See also 1 Pet. 2:5. Faith is that spouse-like grace that marries Christ; and good works are the children which faith beareth. Faith is that superior grace, which, at the motion thereof, all the rest go. Faith is an intelligent grace; it is called the "mystery of godliness," Col. 2:2. Faith raiseth the soul to the highest pitch of reason. Faith is an heart-pacifying grace; peace is the daughter of faith, Faith is the dove that brings the olive branch of peace in its mouth. Faith is an empty hand that receives the precious alms out of Christ's merits, and it is the instrument, or the channel, through which the blessed streams of life flow to us from Him. Faith is an heavenly plant, which will not grow in an impure heart. Faith is an heart-purifying grace, Acts 15:9. It is a virgin grace of a pure and heavenly soil.

Now, for the use of the point — is it so that faith is such an excellent grace? O be pursuing after it. There is more guilt in the sin of unbelief, than in the sin of murder; Matt. 11:24, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom," etc. Luke 10:13. There is no sin made mention of there, but the sin of unbelief. If once ye had that divine plant Faith ingrafted in your souls, it would have a kind of omnipotency. Unbelief passeth under the veil of humility, and so we embrace it, rather than decline it as a sin. Now, the effects of the grace of faith make Christ precious to a soul. It

discovers to a sinner the extract [copy] of his pardon, and that he hath been loved from all eternity; “She loved much, because much was forgiven her.” A Christian that believes shall see Christ as He is. Faith lets a Christian see the accomplishment of the promises. Faith is a sister grace; hope is patient, love is impatient. Faith and hope are two sisters, but they differ thus; hope looks at the excellency of the promise, faith at the certainty of it. Faith can suspend fruition, but love cannot. When Christ and a Christian are trysted together, faith and love grow apace. The best way to improve your necessity, is to believe, although your faith be but in the swaddling-clothes or bands; be content to wait a while, till you have gotten such a vigorous faith as will carry you with full sails to heaven. We have the reversion (future possession) in heaven, when the lease of life is run out. A weak faith may be fruitful; the thief upon the cross had but a weak faith, yet how many precious clusters grew upon that vine? Luke 23:43. Here was a young plant, but very fruitful. Faith is a grace that puts a commentary upon all the actings of Christ. When Christ seems to frown, faith will cry out, I know the thoughts of His heart are not war, but grace to me. Faith can prophesy at midnight. Let a Christian yield to the premises of unbelief, but deny its conclusions. This is bad logic, but it is Christian divinity.

Sirs, did ye never know what it was to use this medium for pardon, “Lord, pardon our iniquities, because they are great?” Christ strengthens love by the discoveries of Himself. Faith discovers the period of our afflictions. Love is written in illegible characters upon the cross; but if ye consult with faith, you may read it. Faith and love, they are pleasant in their lives, and in their death they are not divided. Faith and love are the jewels wherewith Christ’s bride is adorned. Love never ceaseth, 1 Cor. 13:8. In our sense, love is more excellent than faith. The spouse when she goes to heaven, shall put off her jewel of faith, but shall never put off her jewel of love. In heaven the smoke of desire shall be ever bathing itself in the pure and pleasant fountain of glory. That which makes the higher house have such a smell is, the floor and windows are all strewed over with the leaves of the

Rose of Sharon. What joy shall there be when Christ shall take us to His banqueting-house, and kiss us with the kisses of His mouth!

When we shall come to heaven, we shall not know which of our senses shall be most taken up.

Firstly: The eye. What joy to see there the orient brightness in the face of Christ; there you may see the lily and the rose mixed, white and ruddy, Song 5:10.

Secondly: The ear shall be filled with melody; what joy to the spouse to hear Christ's voice, to hear Him say, "My love, My dove, My undefiled!"

Thirdly: The smell shall be filled with sweet savour; what joy to smell that fragrancy and perfume that comes from Christ! All His garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia; the sweet breath of His spirit blowing on thee, and giving forth His scent as the wine of Lebanon.

Fourthly: The taste shall be filled; O what joy is there to be drinking in the fountain of Christ, that is the water of life!

Fifthly: The touch shall be filled; the saints shall be ever in the embraces of Christ! "Behold My hands and My feet — handle Me, and see," etc. Luke 24:39. That will be our work in heaven, when we shall arrive betwixt these sweet arms that were once stretched out upon the cross; there shall be no such inhibition as that to Mary, "Touch Me not." If Christ's sufferings are so full of joy, what are His embraces? What joy will there be at the saints' coronation, when they shall be eternally united to Christ Jesus! When we are in the glorious inheritance, what joy, what glory there in the chambers of His presence! If the streets of this inheritance are of pure gold, what are the furniture and hangings? What is the cabinet of jewels? What are all the rarities of the world, the cost of pearls, yea, what are all things to this place! What a rich place must this needs be, where God will lay out all this cost? This is a purchase worth the getting. What spring will that be, which will never dry up? I think I see the morning-star appear; it is break of day already; who would, for the indulging of a lust, forfeit so glorious an inheritance? Lay the whole world in

the scales with it, it is lighter than vanity. There is the vine flourishing, there are the pomegranates budding, Song 6:11.

While we are sitting at the table, Christ's spikenard will send forth His smell, Song 1:12, There is the bed of love, there are the curtains of Solomon; there is the mountain of spices, and streams from Lebanon; there are the cherubims, not to keep out, but to welcome into paradise; there shall the saints be adorned as a bride with pearls of glory; there God will give us abundance of all that we can ask or think, Eph. 3:20. Such is the excellency of that celestial paradise, that if the angels would take up their responsals to delineate it, they would stain and eclipse the glory of it. When thou wast sailing to hell, for we have both wind and tide to carry us thither, hath the north wind and south wind awakened thee? Have the gales of the Spirit blown upon thee, and turned thy course? Art thou sailing to a new port? Then I am speaking to thee all this while, this glorious inheritance shall be given to thee; but if thou art an old sinner, be assured Christ will never put the new wine of glory into old bottles. We shall add no more. Now, unto the King, eternal, immortal, and invisible, be everlasting praise. Amen.

For Jesus Christ is Precious to Believers

“Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious” 1 Peter 2:7.

O Beloved of the Lord, how long will ye halt between these two opinions? If Christ be precious (as He is), then let the soul embrace Him; and if your idols be precious, then may your souls embrace them, and delight in them. But this we may say of precious Christ, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive and take up these endless and precious perfections that are in precious Christ. We shall never be able to comprehend that excellency, and transcendent comeliness and beauty that is in the face of Him: “He is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand; yea, He is altogether lovely.” And O but He be precious. Certainly if this

question were asked of them above, "What think ye of Christ?" the angels, and all the saints that are about the throne, would venture this answer to the question, Christ is excellent and exceeding precious, and rather a subject to admiration than to speech. And I shall say these six things, all of which, no doubt, do preach this doctrine, that Christ is precious.

And, first, do not all these excellent graces of the Spirit, preach this, that Christ is precious? Does not that noble grace of faith preach this doctrine, that Christ is precious? For by it we must be partakers of communion and fellowship with Him. And does not that excellent grace of love preach that doctrine? For love is that grace that unites the soul of a Christian to Christ. And does not the grace of mortification and the grace of patience preach this, that Christ is precious?

Secondly. Ye may read His preciousness from these senses of the enjoyment of God that the saints in former times have had. Does not their enjoyment say that Christ is precious? And to be brought under the shadow of the Tree of Life, and to be dandled on His knees; for what are all enjoyments that a Christian meets with, but streams of sweetness that flow from that ocean and fountain of everlasting pleasure? And do not all these enjoyments preach this, that Christ is precious?

But, Thirdly. Do not these love-sicknesses that the saints of old have had under absence and distance from Christ preach this doctrine to you, that Christ is precious? (though we confess these diseases are rare in these days); then, O must He not be precious, whose absence for an hour is as an eternity, and whose presence for a thousand years is but as a little moment? O deserted Christians, did ye ever see Him whom your soul loveth? But I fear presence and communion with God is a mystery, and an unknown thing to the most of us.

Fourthly. Ye may read the preciousness of Christ from that unspeakable sorrow and grief that the saints have had under their absence and distance from Christ, their souls refusing to be comforted, and putting on their mourning apparel, and eating their bread with ashes in the heaviness of their spirits. I would ask this

question of you — Why is Christ so little precious to you? Is He less precious in Himself now than He was under the dark Mosaic dispensation of the gospel? No certainly; He is no less precious now than He was then.

And, fifthly, we may read Christ's preciousness from these blessed names that are given to Him in the scriptures; whose name is "the Desire of all nations;" whose name is that "Plant of Renown," and "the Light of that city above," and the "express Image of the Father's person;" He is that "bright and morning star," and that "flower of the tribe of Jesse." And do not all these blessed names of His preach this blessed doctrine, that Christ is precious?

Sixthly. There is this, lastly, that preaches Christ's preciousness, and it is this — that the most unpleasant thing in Christ (if so we may say), is more joyful and precious than the choicest of all created comforts. This is clear, Heb. 11:26, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." And, O, if His reproaches be so excellent and precious, what must His blessings and favourable manifestations be! O Christians, were ye never constrained to desire the tongue of an angel, that ye might be fit to express the praises of that Plant of Renown, even Jesus Christ? O Christians, were ye never constrained, under the sense of your enjoyment of God, to cry out, "It is good for me to be here: let me make tabernacles, and a place of abode?" O therefore account Christ precious.

But to come to the words: In them we have three things to be considered.

First, we have a Christian described from that which is his noble and cardinal excellency, believing; he is a believer.

Secondly, we have the precious advantage that flows to a Christian from the excellency of that noble and excellent grace of faith. And there are these two advantages:

(1). It makes Christ precious unto the soul.

(2). It will keep a soul under the impression of Christ's preciousness: the believing soul will always account Christ

exceeding precious.

The third thing in the words is, that divine reasonableness that faith keeps in its exercise. It is not blind; it looks to the former verse, that because He is a corner-stone, it counts Christ precious, which is imported in that word “therefore.” As for the first thing in the words, the description of a Christian, he is a believer. Having spoken of faith before, we shall not now much insist on it; only we shall propose these three considerations to enforce your pursuit after this noble grace of faith.

First. Faith is that grace that gives a Christian a most broad and comprehensive sight of Christ. It draws aside the veil off the face of Christ, and presents His beauty to the soul. This is clear, Heb. 11:27, “He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” It gives as clear a sight of the invisible God to the soul (in a manner) as if he did visibly behold Him. And there are these four principal parts of Christ’s body that faith lets a Christian see.

(1). It will let the Christian see Christ’s heart. Sense will say of Him, and to Him, thou hast the heart of an enemy; but faith will cry out, I know the thoughts of His heart to be good towards me, to give me an expected and blessed end.

(2). Faith (if so I may speak) looks to Christ’s feet. It takes notice of the actings and motions of Christ; it will cry out, “His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.”

(3). Faith beholds the smilings of Christ’s countenance. When sense can read nothing in His face but wrath and displeasure, then faith draws aside the vail from His countenance, and reads love.

(4). Faith lets a Christian see the hands of Christ. It beholds all His dispensations; it sees infinite love shining in all the actions of Christ. Faith is an intelligent grace. This is clear, Col. 2:2, “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God.”

The second consideration to enforce your pursuit after this noble grace of faith is this: Faith is that grace by which a Christian keeps most communion and fellowship with God; Eph. 3:17, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,” as if He had

said, "By the exercise of all other graces, Christ is to you as a sojourner, that turns in to you but to remain for a night; but, by the exercise of faith, Christ becomes an indweller in your house." Faith will entertain communion with God in crosses, in promises, and in all duties. The believing Christian can keep fellowship with God under his most sad and bitter afflictions.

The third consideration is this, that faith is the mother of a Christian's fruitfulness. This is clear, John 15:5, "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit;" that is, he that believeth in Me, etc. It is likewise clear, 2 Pet. 1:5, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to your virtue knowledge;" there He puts faith in the first place; faith is always fruitful, and never barren. I would say these two words concerning it; first, I confess, though there be a great and marvellous barrenness amongst us, there is not great barrenness in gifts, but in fruitfulness. O what can be the reason of this our unfruitfulness? Surely it is because of the much abounding of that evil of misbelief.

Secondly, I would say, that a Christian may have much visible fruitfulness, when there is much unfruitfulness in his soul, and so may be a barren Christian. By visible fruitfulness, we mean or understand, the going about the exercise of outward duties, when within there is nothing but barrenness in the exercise of inward duties. And there are these four words that I would say to you concerning a natural conscience.

(1). A natural conscience will challenge more for the want of outward sanctification, than for the want of inward sanctification. It will challenge more for pollution in the outward man than for the pollution of the inward man.

(2). It will challenge more for the neglect of the outside of a duty, than for the neglect of secret prayer.

(3). A natural conscience will challenge more for the commission of sin, than for the omission of duty. If he swear, it will challenge him more for that than if he had neglected secret prayer ten times.

(4). A natural conscience will challenge a person more for the

want of sanctification, than for the want of justification.

Now for shutting up our discourse upon this, I would, first, say this to you, O Christians. Can ye read the scriptures and not be constrained to blush? I say, are ye not made to blush when we read of holy Enoch, and of Abraham, David, Paul, and of patient Job? When ye look unto their holy walk and conversation, are ye not made to blush, O Christians? What! think ye the way to heaven more easy then, when they lived, than it is now in our days, under the glorious manifestation of the gospel? No, certainly it was not. It is reported of the heathens, when reflecting upon the famous acts of their predecessors, it bereaved them of their night's rest; and ought not the famous acts of our predecessors bereave us of our sleep also? I must say, if Christ bring many of the Christians of this generation to heaven, surely there must be a stronger exercise of His power exercised towards us than it was before.

There is this secondly that I would say, and it is this, that faith is the predominant grace of a Christian while he is here below, and love shall be the predominant grace when he shall be above. Faith and hope fight the battle, and love divides the spoil. Faith may be called Asher, that is, royal dainties; and it may be called Joseph, in respect of its mother, that is, fruitfulness.

There is this, thirdly, I would say, that there are three idols that are a great difficulty for a Christian to be mortified to:

(1). It is a difficulty for him to be mortified to the applause of the world.

(2). It is a difficulty for a Christian to be mortified to the pleasures of the world.

(3). It is a great difficulty to be mortified to the reproaches of the world. But applause is so far from being a blessing, that it is a woe, Luke 6:26, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you!" Applause of the world is an unconstant thing. It will cry "Hosanna" today, and "Crucify Him" tomorrow.

Now, to speak to the second part of the words, the advantages that come to one from the exercise of faith. We told you that there

were two advantages, and now we shall first speak to this, what it is to have Christ precious to our souls. And, we conceive, it comprehends these things:

(1). It imports this for a Christian to have an high account and estimation of Christ above all things in the world, and to cry out, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee, or in the earth that I desire besides Thee.”

(2). It imports this, for the soul to be much in the exercise of love to Christ, and that is, to have Christ precious.

(3). To have Christ precious is to have communion and fellowship with Him.

But, secondly, we shall speak to this, how faith makes Christ precious to the soul. And the first way is, faith is the spy of the soul; it takes a sight of the comeliness and beauty of Christ, and it cries out, “Thou art all fair, my love, and altogether lovely;” and presently on the back of that, Christ is precious. The second way how faith makes the soul take up Christ to be precious, is this; faith is that grace that makes up our interest and communion with Christ. It is the believing Christian that has most communion and fellowship with Christ. There is this third way whereby faith makes Christ precious to the soul, and it is this; faith is that grace that believes the promises which God hath made to the soul, and that makes Christ precious to the soul. When a Christian shall read 1 John 3:2, and faith believes it sweetly, ye shall be constrained to cry out, “O what a matchless one is Christ.” We shall be constrained to wonder at the love that He has had towards us. There is this fourth way how faith makes Christ precious to the soul. It presents to the Christian the crown of glory, and lets him see all the joys and excellencies of heaven. O believe it, a broad sight of that crown, even of that glorious and immortal crown, would exceedingly commend Christ to your souls. And there is, fifthly, this last way how faith describes and makes Christ precious to the soul. It discovers and presents to you the absolute necessity of embracing Jesus Christ, and that makes Christ precious to the soul.

There is this, thirdly, that we would speak to, and it is this, to

propose some evidences and marks whereby ye may know whether Christ be precious unto you.

There is this first evidence whereby ye may try it. These to whom Christ is precious will have a desire to His image, that is, they will have a desire after holiness. Psalm 51:10, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” O Christians, do you not desire to bear the image of the second Adam, as ye have borne the image of the first Adam?

There is this second evidence. These, to whom Christ is precious, will desire to make a continual and constant use of Christ for justification, that they may be purged, and have the precious lineaments of Christ drawn upon them; and they will make use of Him for wisdom, that they may be directed aright through this wilderness; and they will make use of Him for redemption, that they may be set free from their spiritual enemies. O Christians, durst ye ever say, that ever an idol did assault you, that ye did not embrace? Oh! I fear there are many that may assent unto this truth.

There is this third evidence of those to whom Christ is precious. They will have a desire after more fellowship and communion with God; Song 1:2, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth; for Thy love is better than wine.” And verse 4, “Draw me, we will run after Thee.” Think ye absence from Christ, though never so short, an eternity? If so, it is an evidence that Christ is precious unto you.

There is this fourth evidence of those to whom Christ is precious. They are exceedingly burdened under Christ’s absence and withdrawing from them. The spouse vented her respect to Christ, Song 3, where she sought Him whom her soul loved; she sought Him, but she found Him not; and she continued seeking until she found Him. The spouse vented her respect to Christ in these three things:

(1). That she should have undervalued angels, as John 20:13, “They say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” She, as it were, turned her back on the angels, because

there was none for her but Christ. The happiness of a Christian lies in these words, My Lord, Him have they taken away.

(2). A Christian's anxiety vents itself in this, there will be an unsatisfaction with all the graces, if he is without Christ. This is clear, Song 3:1, 2, and 3. There she had the grace of faith, love, diligence, patience and submission; yet notwithstanding, there is a Him absent that she wishes for.

(3). There is this in which a Christian's anxiety should vent itself, to have a low esteem of all things under Christ; according to that, Psalm 77:2, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my sore ran in the night, and ceased not; my soul refused to be comforted."

There is the fifth evidence of those to whom Christ is precious, they have a spiritual observance and Christian record of the motions of Christ under absence, so far as they can; and when He is present they take notice when they are admitted to taste of the apples of the tree of life, whereof if once ye shall eat, ye shall be as gods, as the devil (or serpent) said to Eve.

And there is this sixth evidence of those to whom Christ is precious. They will be less or more in some measure grieved for grieving and offending Him. I fear I may say this, to the confusion and shame of most of us, that sin was never our burden. O Christians, can Christ be precious to you and yet ye do not hesitate to offend Him?

There is this seventh evidence of those to whom Christ is precious. They will have a high estimation and account of union and fellowship with Christ. O what do the hearts of Christians most run upon? I fear it is not after Christ. There are some whose hearts are upon the world; there are others whose hearts are upon the pleasures of the world; there are some whose hearts are upon the applause of the world; and there are others whose hearts are on the covetousness of the things of the world. This is clear, from Ezek. 33:31, "For with their mouths they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." O, therefore, strive to embrace Jesus Christ. The devil will let you give all your members to Jesus Christ, but he says, 'Give me thy heart.' He will

let you give your eyes, ears, hands, and feet to Christ, but says he, 'Give me thy heart.' I shall rank out these three sorts of persons to you that are not right in heart.

(1). There are some that have a divided heart. Certainly the devil has the hearts of such; James 4:8. Read the last words, "Purify your hearts, ye double-minded."

(2). There are some whose hearts are not divided, namely, atheists. Their hearts are wholly given to the devil. This is clear, Hosea 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone;" or, as the word is, he is "married to his idols." Then surely Christ is not precious to one of these persons. O Christians, has not the world your first thoughts when ye rise in the morning, and your last thoughts when ye go to bed at night! So that I fear our idols have always more of our thoughts than Christ.

(3). There are some whose hearts are wrestling against their predominant lust (although I may say, there are not many such amongst us, who make and count it their main design and business to wrestle against the devil and his temptations), and yet not right, but falling under them.

I shall add this last evidence of one to whom Christ is precious. They will have some delight in duties by which communion and fellowship with God may be attained; Song 3:1, "By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth; I sought Him, but I found Him not." She seeks Him from a principle of delight, of faith, of necessity. O Christians, why go ye to prayer thus? I think most of us go to prayer only from this principle to satisfy a natural conscience. I would shut up our discourse at this time; only I say, this is an evidence of one that has real delight to duty, he has a low estimation and account of all things below Christ, and he has a high esteem only of Christ Himself.

Now, before I close, I would ask the atheists of this congregation these four things.

And first, atheists, is Christ precious to you? Yes, say ye. How is it then that ye hate the saints and people of God, if Christ be

precious to you? For surely we may be persuaded of this, that you cannot love God, if ye have not love to His people; 1 John 4:20, “If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

Secondly, atheists, think ye Christ precious to you, when the exercise of religion is your greatest cross and affliction that you have in the world? Do ye not cry out in the morning, prayer is our greatest burden; and in the evening, it is our greatest cross? And surely there are these two evils that follow such in their prayers; they speak to God as to one of their companions, but they lack that divine reverence that they ought to have in their approaches to God; and the other evil is this, they count that time that is exercised and spent in prayer an exceeding long time; they tire in God’s company; and may not many of us apply to ourselves these two?

There is this thirdly, that I would say. Think ye that Christ is precious to you whose sins were never your burden? Ye may be persuaded of it, He is not precious to you!

The fourth question I would ask is this. Think ye that Christ is precious to you who never knew what it was to distinguish betwixt absence and presence with God in prayer? O Christians, are there not many here who never knew what it was to distinguish the absence of Christ from His presence? Are there not some here who have an unchangeable communion with God which never alters, but still is the same? But surely such may question the reality of their communion. O atheists and traitors to the Son of God, study in this your day to make peace with Him! and ye that desire your eternal well-being, study to have Christ precious to you, otherwise He will be exceedingly terrible. O Christians, what will ye answer to this, has not Christ been offered to you, and have not many of you rejected Him and His offer? O know that matchless fullness and excellency that is in Jesus Christ. What can you desire that is not in Christ? And what can you lack who are in Him, and have Him? He is altogether lovely; He is all desires; He is all-sufficient; He is all in all. O be

persuaded to fall in love with Christ and His offer; with Him who is the Desire of nations, the Flower of the tribe of Jesse, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. O what can we say to persuade you to embrace Christ, to lay hold on His offer? Sure we are, when we shall be brought before the tribunal of God, to receive our sentence of perpetual condemnation, that then it shall be thought that our everlasting concernment was to have embraced Christ. We shall say no more; but know this of certainty, that above the clouds Christ is precious, and that there is not one there but who is crying Hallelujah to Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever. Amen.



Sermons

**For Jesus Christ is
Precious to Believers**



**Andrew
Gray**