

DIRECTION VIII.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[ARGUMENT PRESSING THE EXHORTATION.]

‘Whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked’ (Eph. 6:16)

We have done with the exhortation, and now come to the second general part of the verse, viz. a powerful argument pressing this exhortation, contained in these words—‘Whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.’ ‘Ye shall be able.’ Not an uncertain ‘may be ye shall;’ but he is peremptory and absolute—‘ye shall be able.’ But what to do? ‘able to quench’—not only to resist and repel, but ‘to quench.’ But what shall they ‘quench?’ Not ordinary temptations only, but the worst arrows the devil hath in his quiver—‘fiery darts;’ and not some few of them, but ‘all the fiery darts of the wicked.’ In this second general there are two particulars. **FIRST.** The saint’s enemy described—‘The wicked.’ **SECOND.** The power and puissance of faith over the enemy—‘Ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.’

DIVISION FIRST.—THE SAINT’S ENEMY DESCRIBED.

‘The Wicked.’

Here we have the saint’s enemy described in three particulars. **FIRST.** In their nature—‘wicked.’ **SECOND.** In their unity—‘wicked,’ or ‘wicked one,’ τοῦ πονήρου, in the singular number. **THIRD.** In their warlike furniture and provision, with which they take the field against the saints—‘darts,’ and they are ‘fiery.’

[The saint’s enemy described BY THEIR NATURE.]

FIRST. The saint’s enemy is here described by their nature—‘wicked.’ Something I have said of this, ver. 12 where Satan is called ‘spiritual wickednesses.’¹ I shall at present therefore pass it over with the lighter hand. Certainly there is some special lesson that God would have his people learn even from this attribute of the devil and his limbs—for the whole pack of devils and devilish men are here intended—that they are represented to the saint’s consideration by this name so oft as ‘wicked.’ I shall content myself with **TWO ENDS**, that I conceive God aims at by this name.

First End. They are called ‘wicked,’ as an odious name whereby God would raise his children’s

stomachs into a loathing of sin above all things in the world, and provoke their pure souls as to hatred and detestation of all sin, so [to] a vigorous resistance of the devil and his instruments, as such, who are wicked; which is a name that makes him detestable above any other. God would have us know, that when he himself would speak the worst he can of the devil, he can think of no name for the purpose like this—to say he is ‘the wicked one.’ The name which exalts God highest, and is the very excellency of all his other excellencies, is, that he is ‘the holy One,’ and ‘none holy as the Lord.’ This therefore gives the devil the blackest brand of infamy, that he is ‘the wicked one,’ and none wicked to that height besides himself. Could holiness be separated from any other of God’s attributes—which is the height of blasphemy to think—the glory of them would be departed. And could the devil’s wickedness be removed from his torments and misery, the case would be exceedingly altered. We ought then to pity him whom now we must no less than hate and abominate with a perfect hatred.

1. Consider this, all ye who live in sin, and blush not to be seen in the practice of it. O that you would behold your faces in this glass, and you would see whom you look like! Truly, no other than the devil himself and in that which makes him most odious,

1. see Vol. I p. 128

which is his wickedness. Never more spit at the name of the devil, nor seem to be scared at any ill-shapen picture of him; for thou carriest a far more ugly one—and the truest of him that is possible—in thy own wicked bosom. The more wicked the more like the devil; who can draw the devil’s picture like himself? If thou beest a wicked wretch thou art of the devil himself. ‘Cain,’ it is said, ‘was of that wicked one,’ I John 3:12. Every sin thou committest is a new line that the devil draws on thy soul. And if the image of God in a saint—which the Spirit of God is drawing for many years together in him—will be so curious a piece when the last line shall be drawn in heaven, O think, then, how frightful and horrid a creature thou wilt appear to be, when after all the devil’s pains here on earth to imprint his image upon thee, thou shalt see thyself in hell as wicked to the full as a wicked devil can make thee.

2. Consider this, O ye saints, and bestow your first pity on those poor forlorn souls that are under the power of a wicked devil. It is a lamentable judgment to live under a wicked government, though it be but of men. For a servant in a family to be under a wicked master is a heavy plague. David reckons it among other great curses. ‘Set thou a wicked man over him,’ Ps. 109:6. O what is it then to have a wicked spirit over him! He would show himself very kind to his friend that should wish him to be the worst slave in Turkey, rather than the best servant of sin or Satan. And yet see the folly of men. Solomon tells us, ‘When the wicked bear rule, the people mourn,’ Prov. 29:2. But when a wicked devil rules, poor besotted sinners laugh and are merry. Well, you who are not out of your wits so far, but know sin’s service to be the creature’s utmost misery, mourn for them that go themselves laughing to sin, and by sin to hell.

And again, let it fill thy heart, Christian, with zeal and indignation against Satan in all his temptations. Remember he is wicked, and he can come for no good. Thou knowest the happiness of serving a holy God. Surely, then, thou hast an answer ready by thee against this wicked one comes to draw thee to sin. Canst thou think of fouling thy hands about his base nasty drudgery, after they have been used to so pure and fine work as the service of thy God is? Listen not to Satan’s motions except thou hast a mind to be ‘wicked.’

Second End. They are called ‘wicked,’ as a name of contempt, for the encouragement of all believers in their combat with them. As if God had said, ‘Fear them not; they are a wicked company you go against’—cause, and they who defend it, both ‘wicked.’ And truly, if the saints must have enemies, the worse they are the better it is. It would put mettle into a coward to fight with such a crew. Wickedness must needs be weak. The devils’ guilt in their own bosoms tells them their cause is lost before the battle is fought. They fear thee, Christian, because thou art holy, and therefore thou needest not be dismayed at them who are wicked. Thou lookest on them as subtle, mighty, and many, and then thy heart fails thee. But look on all these subtle mighty spirits as wicked ungodly wretches, that hate God more than thee, yea thee for thy kindred to him, and thou canst not but take heart. Whose side is God on that thou art afraid? Will he that rebuked kings for touching his anointed ones and doing them harm in their bodies and estates, stand still, thinkest thou, and suffer these wicked spirits to attempt the life of God himself in thee, thy grace, thy holiness, without coming in to thy help? It is impossible.

[The saint’s enemy described BY THEIR UNITY.]

SECOND. The saint’s enemy is set out by their unity—‘fiery darts of the wicked’—τοῦ πονήρου ‘of the wicked one.’ It is as if all were shot out of the same bow, and by the same hand; as if the Christian’s fight were a single duel with one single enemy. All the legions of devils, and multitudes of wicked men and women, make but one great enemy. They are all one mystical body of wickedness; as Christ and his saints [are] one mystical holy body. One Spirit acts Christ and his saints; so one spirit acts devils, and ungodly men his limbs. The soul is in the little toe; and the spirit of the devil in the least of sinners. But I have spoken something of this subject elsewhere.²

2. see Vol. I p. 129.

THIRD. The saint's enemy is here described by their warlike furniture and provision with which they take the field against the saints—'darts,' and those of the worst kind, 'fiery darts.'

First. Darts. The devil's temptations are the darts he useth against the souls of men and women. They may fitly be so called in a threefold respect.

1. Darts or arrows are swift. Thence is our usual expression, 'As swift as an arrow out of a bow.' Lightning is called God's arrow, because it flies swiftly. 'He sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them,' Ps. 18:14, that is, lightning like arrows. Satan's temptations flee like a flash of lightning—not long of coming. He needs no more time than the cast of an eye for the despatch of a temptation. David's eye did but unawares fall upon Bathsheba, and the devil's arrow was in his heart before he could shut his casement. Or the hearing of a word or two [will suffice]. Thus, when David's servants had told what Nabal the churl said, David's choler was presently up—an arrow of revenge wounded him to the heart. What quicker than a thought? Yet how oft is that a temptation to us? one silly thought riseth in a duty, and our hearts, before intent upon the work, are on a sudden carried away, like a spaniel after a bird that springs up before him as he goes after his master. Yea, if one temptation speeds not, how soon can he send another after it!—as quick as the nimblest archer. No sooner than one arrow is delivered, but he hath another on the string.

2. Darts or arrows fly secretly. And so do temptations.

(1.) The arrow oft comes afar off. A man may be wounded with a dart and not see who shot it. The wicked are said, to shoot their arrows 'in secret at the perfect,' and then, 'they say, Who shall see them?' Ps 64:4, 5. Thus Satan lets fly a temptation. Sometimes he useth a wife's tongue to do his errand; another while he gets behind the back of a husband, friend, servant, &c., and is not seen all the while he is doing his work. Who would have thought to have found a devil in Peter tempting his master, or suspected that Abraham should be his instrument to betray his be-

loved wife into the hands of a sin? Yet it was so. Nay, sometimes he is so secret that he borrows God's bow to shoot his arrows from, and the poor Christian is abused, thinking it is God chides and is angry, when it is the devil that tempts him to think so, and only counterfeits God's voice. Job cries out of 'the arrows of the Almighty,' how 'the poison of them drank up his spirit,' and of 'the terrors of God that did set themselves in array against him,' Job 6:4, when it was Satan all the while that was practicing his malice and playing his pranks upon him. God was friends with this good man, only Satan begged leave—and God gave it for a time—thus to affright him. And poor Job cries out, as if God had cast him off and were become his enemy.

(2.) Darts or arrows, they make little or no noise as they go. They cut their passage through the air, without telling us by any crack or report, as the cannon doth, that they are coming. Thus insensibly doth temptation make its approach;—the thief is in before we think of any need to shut the doors. The wind is a creature secret in its motion, of which our Saviour saith, 'We know not whence it cometh and whither it goeth,' John 3:8, yet, 'we hear the sound thereof,' as our Saviour saith in the same place. But temptations many times come and give us no warning by any sound they make. The devil lays his plot so close, that the soul sees not his drift, observes not the hook till he finds it in his belly. As the woman of Tekoah told her tale so handsomely, that the king passeth judgment against himself in the person of another before he smelt out the business.

3. Darts have a wounding killing nature, especially when well headed and shot out of a strong bow by one that is able to draw it. Such are Satan's temptations—headed with desperate malice, and drawn by a strength no less than angelical; and this against so poor a weak creature as man, that it were impossible, had not God provided good armour for our soul, to outstand Satan's power and get safe to heaven. Christ would have us sensible of their force and danger, by that petition in his prayer which the best of saints on this side heaven have need to use—'Lead us not into temptation.' Christ was then but newly out of the list, where he had tasted Satan's tempting skill and strength; which, though beneath his wisdom and power to defeat, yet well he knew it was able to worst

the strongest of saints. There was never any besides Christ that Satan did not foil more or less. It was Christ's prerogative to be tempted, but not lead into temptation. Job, one of the chief worthies in God's army of saints, who, from God's mouth, is a none-such, yet was galled by these arrows shot from Satan's bow, and put to great disorder. God was fain to pluck him out of the devil's grip, or else he would have been quite worried by that lion.

Second. Satan's warlike provision is not only darts, but 'fiery darts.' Some restrain these fiery darts to some particular kind of temptation, as despair, blasphemy, and those which fill the heart with terror and horror. But this, I conceive, is too strait; but faith is a shield for all kind of temptations—and indeed there is none but may prove a 'fiery' temptation; so that I should rather incline to think all sorts of temptations to be comprehended here, yet so as to respect some in an especial manner more than others. These shall be afterwards instanced in.

Question. Why are Satan's darts called fiery ones?

Answer 1. They may be said to be 'fiery,' in regard of that fiery wrath with which Satan shoots them. They are the fire this dragon spits, full of indignation

against God and his saints. Saul, it is said, 'breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,' Acts 9:1. As one that is inwardly inflamed, his breath is hot—a fiery stream of persecuting wrath came as out of a burning furnace from him. Temptations are the breathings of the devil's wrath.

Answer 2. They may be said to be 'fiery,' in regard of the end they lead to, if not quenched; and that is hell-fire. There is a spark of hell in every temptation; and all sparks fly to their element. So all temptations tend to hell and damnation, according to Satan's intent and purpose.

Answer 3. And chiefly they may be said to be 'fiery,' in regard of that malignant quality they have on the spirits of men—and that is to enkindle a fire in the heart and consciences of poor creatures. The apostle alludes to the custom of cruel enemies, who used to dip the heads of their arrows in some poison, whereby they became more deadly, and did not only wound the part where they lighted, but inflamed the whole body, which made the cure more difficult. Job speaks of 'the poison of them which drank up his spirits,' Job 6:4. They have an envenoming and inflaming quality.

DIVISION SECOND.—THE POWER AND PUISSANCE OF FAITH OVER THIS ENEMY.

'The shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.'

The fiery darts of Satan which the believing soul is able by faith to quench may be described as of two sorts. **FIRST.** Either those that do pleasingly entice and bewitch with some seeming promises of satisfaction to the creature. Or, **SECOND.** Such as affright and carry horror with them. Both are fiery, and quenched by faith, and only faith.

darts, viz. those temptations that do pleasingly entice and bewitch the soul with some seeming promises of satisfaction to the creature. The note is this:—**DOCTRINE.** That faith will enable a soul to quench the fire of Satan's most pleasing temptations. **FIRST.** We will show you that these enticing temptations have a fiery quality to them. **SECOND.** That faith is able to quench them.

FAITH'S FIRST QUENCHING POWER.

[Satan's 'fiery darts' of PLEASING TEMPTATIONS,
and faith's power to quench them.]

We shall begin with the first sort of Satan's fiery

[Satan's pleasing temptations
HAVE A 'FIERY' QUALITY.]

FIRST. We shall show you that Satan's enticing temptations have a fiery quality in them. They have an inflaming quality. There is a secret disposition in

the heart of all to all sin. Temptation doth not fall on us as a ball of fire on ice or snow, but as a spark on tinder, or [as] lightning on a thatched roof, which presently is on a flame. Hence in Scripture, though tempted by Satan, yet the sin is charged on us. 'Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,' James 1:14. Mark! it is Satan tempts, but our own lust draws us. The fowler lays the shrap,³ but the bird's own desire betrays it into the net. The heart of a man is marvellous prone to take fire from these darts. 'Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out,' Prov. 26:20. Thus the 'fiery darts' on Christ. There was no combustible matter of corruption in him for Satan to work upon. But our hearts being once heated in Adam could never cool since. A sinner's heart is compared to 'an oven.' 'They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker,' Hosea 7:4. The heart of man is the oven, the devil the baker, and temptation the fire with which he heats it; and then no sin comes amiss. 'I lie,' saith David, 'among them that are set on fire,' Ps. 57:4. And, I pray, who sets them on fire? The apostle will resolve us, 'set on fire of hell,' James 3:6. O friends! when once the heart is inflamed by temptation, what strange effects doth it produce! how hard to quench such a fire, though in a gracious person! David himself, under the power of a temptation so apparent that a carnal eye could see it—Joab I mean, who reproved him—yet was hurried to the loss of seventy thousand men's lives; for so much that one sin cost. And if the fire be so raging in a David, what work will it make where no water is nigh, no grace in the heart to quench it? Hence the wicked are said to be 'mad' upon their idols, Jer. 1:38—spurring on without fear or wit, like a man inflamed with a fever that takes his head; there is no holding of him then in his bed. Thus the soul possessed with the fury of temptation runs into the mouth of death and hell, and will not be stopped.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. O how should this make us afraid of running into a temptation when there is such a witch-

3. Shrap, or shrape, a place baited with chaff to entice birds. Imp. Dict. — ED.

ery in it. Some men are too confident. They have too good an opinion of themselves—as if they could not be taken with such a disease, and therefore will breathe in any air. It is just with God to let such be shot with one of Satan's darts, to make them know their own hearts better. Who will pity him whose house is blown up, that kept his powder in the chimney corner? 'Is thy servant a dog,' saith Hazael, II Kings 8:13. Do you make me a beast, sunk so far below the nature of man as to imbrue my hands in these horrid murders? Yet, how soon did this wretch fall into the temptation, and, by that one bloody act upon his liege lord, which he perpetrated as soon as he got home, show that the other evils, which the prophet foretold of him, were not so improbable as at first he thought. Oh, stand off the devil's mark, unless you mean to have one of the devil's arrows in your side! Keep as far from the whirl of temptation as may be. For if once he got you within his circle, thy head may soon be dizzy. One sin helps to kindle another; the less the greater, as the brush the logs. When the courtiers had got their king to carouse and play the drunkard, he soon learned to play the scorner: 'The princes have made him sick with bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scornors,' Hosea 7:5.

Use Second. Hath Satan's darts such an enkindling nature? take heed of being Satan's instrument in putting fire to the corruption of another. Some on purpose do it. Idolaters set out their temples and altars with superstitious pictures, embellished with all the cost that gold and silver can afford them, to bewitch the spectator's eye. Hence they are said to be 'inflamed with their idols,' Isa. 57:5—as much as any lover with his minion. And the drunkard, he enkindles his neighbour's lust, 'putting the bottle to him,' Hab. 2:15. O what a base work are these men employed about! By the law it is death for any wilfully to set fire on his neighbour's house. What then deserve they that set fire on the souls of men, and that no less than hell-fire? But, is it possible thou mayest do it unawares by a less matter than thou dreamest on. A silly child playing with a lighted straw may set a house on fire which many wise cannot quench. And truly Satan may use thy folly and carelessness to kindle lust in another's heart. Perhaps an idle light speech drops from thy mouth, and thou meanest no great hurt; but a gust of temptation may carry this

spark into thy friend's bosom, and kindle a sad fire there. A wanton attire, which we will suppose thou wearest with a chaste heart, and only because it is the fashion, yet may ensnare another's eye. And if he that kept a pit open but to the hurt of a beast, sinned, how much more thou, who givest occasion to a soul's sin, which is a worse hurt? Paul 'would not eat flesh while the world stood, if it made his brother offend,' I Cor. 8:13. And canst thou dote on a foolish dress and immodest fashion, whereby many may offend, still to wear it? 'The body,' Christ saith, 'is better than raiment.' The soul, then, of thy brother is more to be valued surely than an idle fashion of thy raiment. We come to the second branch of the point.

[FAITH'S POWER TO QUENCH
Satan's pleasing temptations.]

SECOND. We shall show you that faith will enable a soul to quench the pleasing temptations of the wicked one. This is called our 'victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,' I John 5:4. Faith sets its triumphant banner on the world's head. The same St. John will tell you what is meant by the world: 'Love not the world;... for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world,' I John 2:15, 16. All that is in the world is said to be 'lust,' because it is food and fuel for lust. Now faith enables the soul to quench those darts which Satan dips and envenoms with these worldly lusts—called by some the worldlings Trinity.

First Dart of pleasing temptations. 'The lust of the flesh.' Under this are comprehended those temptations that promise pleasure and delight to the flesh. These indeed carry fire in the mouth of them; and when they light on a carnal heart, do soon inflame it with unruly passions and beastly affections. The adulterer is said to bum in his lust, Rom. 1:27. The drunkard to be 'inflamed with his wine,' Isa. 5:11. No sort of temptation works more strongly than those which present sensual pleasure and promise delight to the flesh. Sinners are said to 'work all uncleanness with greediness'—with a kind of covetousness; for the

word imports they never have enough.⁴ When the voluptuous person hath wasted his estate, jaded his body in luxury, still the fire burns in his wretched

4. The following is a series of quotes that refer to what the Rev. Gurnall is stating here. The reason for the Scripture citation is obvious. The next two references are language resources that give fuller information on the word in question. These I have supplied to aid the reader in understanding the point and were not supplied with the book. — SDB.

¹⁷This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: ¹⁹who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness,⁴¹²⁴

— Ephesians 4

4124 πληονηξία pleonexia {pleh-on-ex-ee'-ah}

from 4123; TDNT 6:266,864; n f

AV - covetousness 8, greediness 1, covetous practice 1; 10

1) greedy desire to have more, covetousness, avarice

gen. pleonexias, fem. noun from pleion (4119), more, and écho (2192) to have. Covetousness, greediness (Luke 12:15; Rom. 1:29 [cf. I Cor. 5:10, 11]; II Cor. 9:5, "as bounty or blessing on your part, and not as covetousness on ours, not as extorted by us from you" (a. t.); Eph. 4:19; I Thes. 2:5; II Peter 2:3, 14; LXX, Jer. 22:7; Hab. 2:9). Pleonexia is a larger term which includes philarguria (5365), love of money to hoard away, avarice. It is connected with extortioners (I Cor. 5:10); with thefts (Mark 7:22, covetous thoughts, plans of fraud and extortion); with sins of the flesh (Eph. 5:3, 5; Col. 3:5). Pleonexia may be said to be the root from which these sins grow, the longing of the creature which has forsaken God to fill itself with the lower objects of nature.

From The Complete Word Study New Testament
Dictionary
By Spiros Zodhiates © 1992

And Vine notes that this Greek word is used always in the bad or evil sense.

— From Vine's: under "covetousness," no. 3.

heart. No drink will quench a poisoned man's thirst. Nothing but faith can be helpful to a soul in these flames. We find Dives in hell burning, and not 'a drop of water to cool the tip of his tongue' found there. The unbelieving sinner is in a hell above ground. He burns in his lust, and not a drop of water, for want of faith, to quench the fire. By faith it is said those glorious martyrs 'quenched the violence of the fire,' Heb. 11. And truly the fire of lust is as hot as the fire of martyrdom. By faith alone this is quenched also: 'We...were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures,...But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,...he saved us,' Titus 3:3, 4. Never could they shake off these lusts, the old companions, till by faith they got a new acquaintance with the grace of God revealed in the gospel.

[How faith quenches the 'lust of the flesh.']

Question. How does faith quench this fiery dart of sensual delights?

Answer 1. As it undeceives and takes off the mist from the Christian's eyes, whereby he is now enabled to see sin in its naked being and callow⁵ principles before Satan hath plumed [it]. It gives him the native taste and relish of sin before the devil hath sophisticated it with his sugared sauce. And truly, now sin proves a homely piece, a bitter morsel. Faith hath a piercing eye; it is 'the evidence of things not seen.' It looks behind the curtain of sense, and sees sin, before its fiery was on and it be dressed for the stage, to be a brat that comes from hell, and brings hell with it. Now, let Satan come if he please, and present a lust never so enticing, the Christian's answer is ready. 'Be not cheated, O my soul,' saith faith, 'with a lying spirit.' He shows thee a fair Rachel, but he intends thee a blear-eyed Leah; he promises joy, but he will pay thee sorrow. The clothes that make this lust so comely are not its own. The sweetness thou tastest is not native, but borrowed to deceive thee withal. 'Thou art Saul,' saith the woman of Endor, 'why hast thou deceived me?' Thus, faith can call sin and Satan by their own names when they come in a disguise.

'Thou art Satan,' saith faith, 'why wouldst thou deceive me? God hath said sin is bitter as gall and wormwood, and wouldst thou make me believe I can gather the sweet fruits of true delight from this root of bitterness? grapes from these thorns?'

Answer 2. Faith doth not only enable the soul to see the nature of sin void of all true pleasure, but also how transient its false pleasures are. I will not lose, saith faith, sure mercies for transient uncertain pleasures. This made Moses leap out of the pleasures of the Egyptian court into the fire of 'affliction,' Heb. 11:25, because he saw them 'pleasures for a season.' Should you see a man in a ship throw himself overboard into the sea, you might at first think him out of his wits; but if, a little while after, you should see him stand safe on the shore, and the ship swallowed up of the waves, you should then think he took the wisest course. Faith sees the world and all the pleasures of sin sinking: there is a leak in them which the wit of man cannot stop. Now is it not better to swim by faith through a sea of trouble and get safe to heaven at last, than to sin in the lap of sinful pleasures till we drown in hell's gulf? It is impossible that the pleasure of sin should last long.

(1.) Because it is not natural. Whatever is not natural soon decays. The nature of sugar is to be sweet, and therefore it holds its sweetness; but sweeten beer or wine never so much with sugar, in a few days they will lose their sweetness. The pleasure of sin is extrinsic to its nature, and therefore will corrupt. None of that sweetness which now bewitches sinners will be tasted in hell. The sinner shall have his cup spiced there by his hand that will have it a bitter draught.

(2.) The pleasures of sin must needs be short, because life cannot be long, and they both end together. Indeed, many times the pleasure of sin dies before the man dies. Sinners live to bury their joy in this world. The worm breeds in their conscience before it breeds in their flesh by death. But be sure that the pleasure of sin never survives this world. The word is gone out of God's mouth, every sinner shall 'lie down in sorrow and wake in sorrow.' Hell is too hot a climate for wanton delights to live in. Now faith is a provident, wise grace, and makes the soul bethink itself how it may live in another world. Whereas the carnal heart is all for the present; his snout is in the

5. Callow, bare, wanting feathers. — Ed.

trough, and, while his draught lasts he thinks it will never end. But faith hath a large stride; at one pace it can reach over a whole life of years and see them done while they are but beginning. 'I have seen an end of all perfections,' saith David. He saw the wicked, when growing on their bed of pleasure, cut down, and burning in God's oven, as if it were done already, Ps. 37:2. And faith will do the like for every Christian according to its strength and activity. And who would envy the condemned man his feast which he hath in his way to the gallows.

Answer 3. Faith outvies Satan's proffers by showing the soul where choicer enjoyments are to be had at a cheaper rate. Indeed, 'best is best cheap.' Who will not go to that shop where he may be best served? This law holds in force among sinners themselves. The drunkard goes where he may have the best wine; the glutton where he may have the best cheer. Now faith presents such enjoyments to the soul that are beyond all compare best. It leads to the promise, and entertains it there, at Christ's cost, with all the rich dainties of the gospel. Not a dish that the saints feed on in heaven but faith can set before the soul, and give it, though not a full meal, yet such a taste as shall melt it in 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' This sure must needs quench the temptation. When Satan sends to invite the Christian to his gross fare, will not the soul say, 'Should I forsake those pleasures that cheered, yea ravished, my heart, to go and debase myself with sin's polluted bread, where I shall be but a fellow-commoner with the beast, who shares in sensual pleasures with man—yea, become worse than the beast—a devil, like Judas, who arose from his Master's table to sit at the devil's?'

Second Dart of pleasing temptations. 'The lust of the eyes.' This is quenched by faith. By 'the lust of the eyes,' the apostle means those temptations which are drawn from the world's pelf and treasure. [It is] called so, in the first place, because it is the eye that commits adultery with these things. As the unclean eye looks upon another man's wife, so the covetous eye looks upon another's wealth to lust after it. In the second place it is called so, because all the good that in a manner is received from them is but to please the eye. 'What good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?' Ecc. 5:11. That is, if a man hath but to buy food and

raiment enough to pay his daily shot of necessary expenses, the surplusage serves only for the eye to play the wanton with. Yet we see how pleasing a morsel they are to a carnal heart. It is rare to find a man that will not stoop, by base and sordid practices, to take up this golden apple. When I consider what sad effects this temptation had on Ahab, who, to gain a spot of ground of a few acres, that could not add much to a king's revenues, durst swim to it in the owner's blood, I wonder not to see men whose condition is necessitous nibbling at the hook of temptation, where the bait is a far greater worldly advantage. This is the door the devil entered into Judas by. This was the break-neck of Demas' faith, he embraced 'this present world.' Now faith will quench a temptation edged with these.

[How faith quenches the 'lust of the eyes.']

1. Faith persuades the soul of God's fatherly care and providence over it. And where this breast-work is raised the soul is safe so long as it keeps within its line. 'Oh!' saith Satan, 'if thou wouldst but venture on a lie—make bold a little with God in such a command—this wedge of gold is thine, and that advantage will accrue to thy estate.' Now faith will teach the soul to reply, 'I am well provided for already, Satan; I need not thy pension; why should I play the thief for that which, if good, God hath promised to give?' 'Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Heb. 13:5. How canst thou want, O my soul, that by the promise hast command of God's purse? Let him that is 'without God in the world' shift and shirk by his wits; do thou live by thy faith.

2. Faith teaches the soul that the creature's comfort and content comes not from abundance but God's blessing. And to gain the world by a sin is not the road that leads to God's blessing. 'A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent,' Prov. 28:20. 'Shouldst thou,' saith faith, 'heap up the world's goods in an evil way, thou art never the nearer to the content thou expectest.' It is hard to steal one's meat and then crave a blessing on it at God's hands. What thou gettest by sin Satan cannot give thee quiet possession of, nor

discharge those suits which God will surely commence against thee.

3. Faith advanceth the soul to higher projects than to seek the things of this life. It discover a world beyond the moon—and there lies faith's merchandise—leaving the colliers of this world to load themselves with clay and coals, while it trades for grace and glory. Faith fetcheth its riches from on far. Saul did not more willingly leave seeking his father's asses when he heard of a kingdom, than the believing soul leaves proling for the earth now it hears of Christ and heaven, Ps. 39:6, 7. We find, ver. 6, holy David branding the men of the world for folly, that they troubled themselves so much for naught: 'Surely,' saith he, 'they are disquieted in vain; he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.' And, ver. 7, we have him with a holy disdain turning his back upon the world as not worth his pains: 'And now, Lord, what wait I for?' As if he had said, Is this the portion I could be content to sit down with?—to sit upon a greater heap of riches than my neighbour hath? 'My hope is in thee; deliver me from all my transgressions,' ver. 8. Every one as they like. Let them that love the world take the world; but, Lord, pay not my portion in gold or silver, but in pardon of sin. This I wait for. Abraham, he by faith had so low an esteem of this world's treasure that he left his own country to live here a stranger, in hope of 'a better,' Heb. 11:16.

Third Dart of pleasing temptations. 'The pride of life.' There is an itch of pride in man's heart after the gaudy honours of the world; and this itch of man's proud flesh the devil labours to scratch and irritate by suitable proffers. And when the temptation without and lust within meet, then it works to purpose. Balaam loved the way that led to court; and therefore spurs on his conscience—that boggled more than the ass he rode on—till the blood came. The Jews when convinced of Christ's person and doctrine, yet were such slaves to their honour and credit, that they part with Christ rather than hazard that. 'For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God,' John 12:43. Now faith quenches this temptation, and, with a holy scorn, disdains that all the preferment the world hath to heap on him should be a bribe for the least sin. 'By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,' Heb. 11:24, though by this adoption he

might have been heir, for aught we know, of the crown; yet this he threw at his heels. It is not said, 'he did not seek to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter,' though that would have sounded a high commendation, having so fair an opportunity. Some would not have scrupled a little court flattery, thereby to have cologued⁶ themselves into further favour—having so fair a stock in the king's heart to set up with. But, it is said that he 'refused to be called' by this name. Honour came trouling in upon him, as water at a flowing tide. Now, to stand against this flood of preferment, and no breach made in his heart to entertain it—this was admirable indeed. Nay, he did not refuse this preferment for any principality that he hoped for elsewhere. He forsook not one court to go to another, but to join with a beggarly reproached people. Yea, by rejecting their favour he incurred the wrath of the king. Yet faith carried him through all those heights and depths of favour and disgrace, honour and dishonour; and truly, wherever this grace is—allowing for its strength and weakness—it will do the like. We find, Heb. 11:33, how Samuel and the prophets 'through faith subdued kingdoms.' This, sure, is not only meant of the conquest of the sword—though some of them performed honourable achievements that way—but also by despising the honour and preferments of them. This indeed many of the prophets are famous for; and in particular Samuel, who, at God's command, gave away a kingdom from his own house and family by anointing Saul, though himself at present had possession of the chief magistrate's chair. And others, ver. 37, we read, 'were tempted;' that is, when ready to suffer, were offered great preferments if they would bend to the times by receding a little from the bold profession of their faith; but they chose rather the flames of martyrdom than the favour of princes on those terms. But, more particularly to show you how faith quenches this temptation.

[How faith quenches 'the pride of life.']

1. Faith takes away the fuel that feeds this temp-

6. Cologued: intrigue, conspire; to talk privately, confer. From Webster's. — SDB

tation. Withdraw the oil and the lamp goes out. Now that which is fuel to this temptation is pride. Where this lust is in any strength, no wonder the creature's eyes are dazzled with the sight of that which suits the desires of his heart so well. The devil now by a temptation does but broach, and so give vent to, what the heart itself is full with. Simon Magus had a haughty spirit; he would be Simon μέγας—some great man, and therefore, when he did but think an opportunity as offered to mount him up the stage, he is all on fire with a desire of having a gift to work miracles, that he dares to offer to play the huckster with the apostle. Whereas a humble spirit loves a low seat; is not ambitious to stand high in the thoughts of others; and so, while he stoops in his own opinion of himself, the bullet flees over his head which hits the proud man on the breast. Now it is faith lays the heart low. Pride and faith are opposed; like two buckets, if one goes up the other goes down in the soul. 'Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith,' Hab. 2:4.

2. Faith is Christ's favourite, and so makes the Christian expect all his honour from him. Indeed it is one of the prime acts of faith to cast the soul on God in Christ as all-sufficient to make it completely happy; and therefore, when a temptation comes—'soul, thou mayest raise thyself in the world to this place or that esteem, if thou wilt but dissemble thy profession, or allow thyself in such a sin'—now faith chokes the bullet. Remember whose thou art, O my soul. Hast thou not taken God for thy liege-lord, and wilt thou accept preferment from another's hand? Princes will not suffer their courtiers to become pensioners to a foreign prince—least of all to a prince in hostility to them. Now, saith faith, the honour or applause thou gettest by sin makes thee pensioner to the devil himself, who is the greatest enemy God hath.

3. Faith shows the danger of such a bargain, should a Christian gain the glory of the world for one sin.

(1.) Saith faith, Hadst thou the whole world's empire, with all bowing before thee, this would not add to thy stature one cubit in the eye of God. But thy sin which thou payest for the purchase blots thy name in his thoughts; yea, makes thee odious in his sight. God must first be out of love with himself be-

fore he can love a sinner as such. Now, wilt thou incur this for that? Is it wisdom to lose a prize, to draw a blank?

(2.) Saith faith, The world's pomp and glory cannot satisfy thee. It may kindle thirstings in thy soul, but quench none; it will beget a thousand cares and fears, but quiet none. But thy sin that procures these hath a power to torment and torture thy soul.

(3.) When thou hast the world's crown on thy head, how long shalt thou wear it? They are sick at Rome, as he said, and die in princes' courts, as well as at the spital; yea, kings themselves are put as naked to their beds of dust as others. In that day all thy thoughts will perish with thee. But the guilt of thy sin, which was the ladder by which thou didst climb up the hill of honour, will dog thee into another world. These and such like are the considerations by which faith breaks off the bargain.

4. Faith presents the Christian with the exploits of former saints, who have renounced the world's honour and applause, rather than defile their consciences, and prostitute their souls to be deflowered by the least sin. Great Tamerlane carried the lives of his ancestors into the field with him, in which he used to read before he gave battle, that he might be stirred up not to stain the blood of his family by cowardice or any unworthy behaviour in fight. Thus, faith peruses the roll of Scripture-saints, and the exploits of their faith over the world, that the Christian may be excited to the same gallantry of spirit. This was plainly the apostle's design in recording those worthies, with the trophies of their faith, Heb. 11—that some of their nobleness might steal into our hearts while we are reading of them, as appears, 'Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,' Heb. 12:1. Oh, what courage does it put into the soldier to see some before him run upon the face of death! Elisha, having seen the miracles of God wrought by Elijah, smites the waters of Jordan with his mantle, saying, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?'—'and they parted,' II Kings 2:14. Thus faith makes use of the exploits of former saints and turns them into prayer. Oh where is the Lord God of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and those other worthies, who by faith have trampled on the world's pomp and glory, subdued temptations, stopped the mouths of lion-

like lusts? Art not thou, O God, god of the valleys—the meanest saints, as well as of the mountains—more eminent heroes? Do not the same blood and spirits run in the veins of all believers? Were they victorious, and shall I be the only slave, and of so prostrate a spirit, like Issachar, to couch under my burden of corruption without shaking it off? Help me, O my God, that I may be avenged of these my enemies. And when it hath been with God it will also plead with the Christian himself. ‘Awake,’ saith faith, ‘O my soul, and prove thyself akin to these holy men—that thou art born of God as they were—by thy victory over the world.’

[Faith’s victory over the world distinguished from that attained by some of the better heathens.]

Objection. But some may say, if this be all faith enables to, this is no more than some heathens have done. They have trampled on the profits, pleasures of the world, who never knew what faith meant.

Answer. Indeed, many of them have done so much by their moral principles, as may make some, who would willingly pass for believers, ashamed to be outgone by them who shot in so weak a bow. Yet it will appear that there is a victory of faith, which, in the true believer, outshoots them more than their moral conquest doth the debauched conversations of looser Christians.

1. Distinction. Faith quenches the lust of the heart. Those very embers of corruption, which are so secretly raked up in the inclination of the soul, find the force and power of faith to quench them. Faith purifies the heart, Acts 15:9. Now none of their conquests reach the heart. Their longest ladder was too short to reach the walls of this castle. They swept the door, trimmed a few outward rooms; but the seat and sink of all, in the corruption of man’s nature, was never cleansed by them; so that the fire of lust was rather pent in than put out. How is it possible that could be cleansed, the filthiness of which was never known to them? Alas! they never looked so near themselves to find that enemy within them which they thought was without. Thus, while they laboured to keep the thief out he was within, and they knew it not. For they did either proudly think that the soul was naturally endued with principles of virtue, or

vainly imagined it to be but an *abrasa tabula*—white paper, on which they might write good or evil as they pleased. Thus you see the seat of their war was in the world without them, which, after some sort, they conquered; but the lust within remained untouched, because a *terra incognita*—an unknown region to them. It is faith from the word that first discovers this un-found land.

2. Distinction. Faith’s victory is uniform. Sin in Scripture is called a ‘body,’ Rom. 6:6, because made up of several members, or as the body of an army, consisting of many troops and regiments. It is one thing to beat a troop or put a wing of an army to flight, and another thing to rout and break the whole army. Something hath been done by moral principles, like the former. They have got some petty victory, and had the chase of some more gross and exterior sin; but then they were fearfully beaten by some other of sin’s troops. When they seemed to triumph over ‘the lust of the flesh’ and ‘eye’—the world’s profits and pleasures—they were at the same time slaves to ‘the pride of life,’ mere *gloriæ animalia*—creatures of fame—kept in chains by the credit and applause of the world. As the sea which, they say, loses as much in one place of the land as it gains in another; so, what they got in a seeming victory over one sin they lost again by being in bondage to another, and that a worse, because more spiritual. But now, faith is uniform, and routs the whole body of sin, that not one single lust stands in its unbroken strength. ‘Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace,’ Rom. 6:14. ‘Sin shall not’—that is, no sin; it may stir like a wounded soldier on his knees—they may rally like broken troops, but never will they be long master of the field where true faith is seen.

3. Distinction. Faith enables the soul not only to quench these lusts, but, the temptation being quenched, it enables him to use the world itself against Satan, and so beat him with his own weapon by striking his own cudgels to his head. Faith quenches the fire of Satan’s darts, and then shoots them back on him. This it doth by reducing all the enjoyments of the world which the Christian is possessed of into a serviceableness and subordination for the glory of God.

Some of the heathens’ admired champions, to

cure ‘the lust of the eyes,’ have from a blind zeal plucked them out; to show the contempt of riches, have thrown their money into the sea; to conquer the world’s honour and applause, have sequestered themselves from all company in the world—a preposterous way that God never chalked. Shall we call it a victory or rather a frenzy? The world by this time perceives their folly. But faith enables for a nobler conquest. Indeed, when God calls for any of these enjoyments, faith can lay all at Christ’s feet. But while God allows them, faith’s skill and power is in sanctifying them. It corrects the windiness and flatulent nature of them so, that what on a naughty heart rots and corrupts, by faith turns to good nourishment in a gracious soul. If a house were on fire, which would you count the wiser man—he that goes to quench the fire by pulling the house down, or he that by throwing good store of water on it, doth this as fully, and also leaves the house standing for your use? The heathen and some superstitious Christians think to mortify by taking away what God gives us leave to use; but faith puts out the fire of lust in the heart, and leaves the creature to be improved for God’s glory and enjoyed to the Christian’s comfort.

[Use or Application.]

Use First. This may be a touchstone for our faith, whether of the right make or no; is thy faith a temptation-quenching faith? Many say they believe. Yes, that they do! They thank God they are not infidels. Well, what exploits canst thou do with thy faith? Is it able to defend thee in a day of battle, and cover thy soul in safety when Satan’s darts flee thick about thee? Or is it such a sorry shield that lets every arrow of temptation pierce thy heart through it? Thou believest, but still as very a slave to thy lust as ever. When a good fellow calls thee out to a drunken meeting, thy faith cannot keep thee out of the snare, but away thou goest, as a fool to the stocks. If Satan tells thee thou mayest advantage thy estate by a lie, or cheat in thy shop, thy faith stands very tamely by and makes no resistance. In a word, thou hast faith, and yet drivest a trade of sin in the very face of it! Oh! God forbid that any should be under so great a spirit of delusion to carry such a lie in their hand and think it a saving faith. Will this faith ever carry thee to

heaven that is not able to bring thee out of hell? for there thou livest while under the power of thy lust. ‘Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely,... and come and stand before me,’ Jer. 7:9. If this be faith, well fare and honest heathens who escaped these gross pollutions of the world, which you like beasts with your faith lie wallowing in. I had rather be a sober heathen than a drunken Christian, a chaste heathen than an unclean believer.

Oh venture not the life of your souls with such a paper shield. Come to him for a faith that is the faith maker—God I mean. He will help thee to a faith that shall quench the very fire of hell itself, though kindled in thy bosom, and divide the waves of thy lust in which now thou art ever drowned—as once he did the sea for Israel—that thou shalt go on dry land to heaven, and thy lusts not be able to knock off the wheels of thy chariot. But, if thou attemptest this with thy false faith, the Egyptians’ end will be thine. ‘By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned,’ Heb. 11:29. Though true faith gets safely through the depths of temptation, yet false faith will drown by the way.

But, perhaps thou canst tell us better news than this, and give us better evidence for the truth of thy faith than so. Let us therefore hear what singular thing hath been done by thee since a believer. The time was thou wert as weak as water; every puff of wind, blast of temptation, blew thee down; thou wert carried as a dead fish with the stream. But, canst thou say [that] since thou hast been acquainted with Christ thou art endued with a power to repel those temptations which before held thy heart in perfect obedience to their commands? Canst thou now be content to bring thy lusts, which once were of great price with thee—as those believers did their conjuring books, Acts 19:19—and throw them into the fire of God’s love in Christ to thy soul, there to consume them? Possibly thou hast not them at present under thy foot in a full conquest. Yet have they begun to fall in thy thoughts of them? and is thy countenance changed towards them to {from} what it was? Be of good comfort, this is enough to prove thy faith of a royal race. ‘When Christ cometh,’ said the convinced Jews, ‘will he do more mirades than these which this man hath done?’ John 7:31. And when Christ comes

by faith into the heart, will he do greater works than these thy faith hath done?

Use Second. This helps to answer that objection by which many poor souls are discouraged from believing and closing with the promise. 'Oh,' saith the tempted soul, 'ye bid me believe—alas! how dare I, when I cannot get victory of such a lust, and am overcome by such a temptation? What have such as I to do with a promise?' See here, poor soul, this Goliath prostrated. Thou art not to believe because thou art victorious, but that thou mayest be victorious. The reason why thou art so worsted by thy enemy is for want of faith. 'If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established,' Isa. 7:9. Wouldst thou be cured before thou goest to the physician? that sounds harsh to thy own reason, and is as if thou shouldst say thou wilt not go to the physician till thou hast no need of him. No; go and touch Christ by faith that virtue may flow from him to thy soul; thou must not think to eat the fruit before thou plantest the tree. Victory over corruption is a sweet fruit; but found growing upon faith's branches. Satan does by thee as Saul did by the Israelites, who weakened their hands in battle by keeping them fasting. Up and eat, Christian, a full meal on the promise, if thou wouldst find thy eyes enlightened and thy hands strengthened for the combat with thy lusts. It is one part of the 'doctrine of devils,' which we read of, I Tim. 4:3, to forbid 'meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving.' But the grand doctrine of the devil which above all he would promote is, to keep poor trembling souls from feeding by faith on the Lord Jesus; as if Christ were some forbidden fruit! Whereas, God hath appointed him above all other, that he should be received with thanksgiving of all humble sinners. And therefore, in the name of God, I invite you to this feast. Oh, let not your souls—who see your need of Christ, and are pinched at your very heart for want of him—be lean from day to day from your unbelief; but come, 'eat, and your souls shall live.' Never was child more welcome to his father's table than thou art to Christ's, and that feast which stands on the gospel board.

Use Third. Make use of faith, O ye saints, as for other ends and purposes, so particularly for this, of quenching this kind of fiery darts, viz. enticing temptations. It is not the having of a shield, but the hold-

ing and wielding of it, that defends the Christian. Let not Satan take thee with thy faith out of thy hand, as David did Saul in the cave, with his spear sticking in the ground which should have been in his hand.

[Directions how to use the shield of faith to quench enticing temptations.]

Question. But how would you have me use my shield of faith for my defence against these fiery darts of Satan's enticing temptations?

Answer. By faith engage God to come in to thy succour against them. Now, there are three engaging acts of faith which will bind God—as we may so say with reverence—to help thee, because he binds himself to help such.

Direction 1. The first is the prayerful act of faith. Open thy case to God in prayer, and call in help from heaven—as the governor of a besieged castle would send a secret messenger to his general or prince to let him know his state and straits. The apostle James saith, 'Ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not,' chap. 4:2. Our victory must drop from heaven if we have any. But it stays till prayer comes for it. Though God had a purpose to deliver Israel out of Egypt, yet no news of his coming till the groans of his people rang in his ears. This gave heaven the alarm, 'Their cry has come up to God,... and God heard their groaning, and remembered his covenant,' Ex. 2:24. Now the more to prevail upon God in this act of faith, fortify thy prayer with those strong REASONS which saints have used in like cases. As,

(1.) Engage God from his promise when thou prayest against any sin. Show God his own hand in such promises as these, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you,' Rom. 6:14. 'He will subdue our iniquities,' Micah 7:19. Prayer is nothing but the promise reversed, or God's word formed into an argument, and retorted by faith upon God again. Know, Christian, thou hast law on thy side; bills and bonds must be paid, Ps. 119:37. David is there praying against the sins of a wanton eye and a dead heart, 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.' And see how he urgeth his argument in the next words—'Stablish thy word unto thy servant.' A good man is as good as his word, and will not a good God? But where finds David such a word for help against

these sins? surely in the covenant; it is the Magna Charta. The first promise held forth thus much, 'The seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head.'

(2.) Plead with God from relation when thou art against any sin. Art thou one God hath taken into his family? Hast thou chosen God for thy God? Oh what an argument hast thou here! 'I am thine, Lord, save me,' saith David. Who will look after the child if the father will not? Is it for thy honour, O God, that any child of thine should be a slave to sin? 'Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.' 'Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me,' Ps. 119:132.

(3.) Engage God from his Son's bloody death to help thee against thy lusts that were his murderers. What died Christ for but to 'redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people,' Titus 2:14. And shall not Christ be reimbursed of what he laid out? Shall he not have the price of his blood and purchase of his death? In a word, what is Christ praying for in heaven, but what was in his mouth when praying on earth? That his Father would 'sanctify them, and keep them from the evil of the world.' Thou comest in a good time to beg that of God which thou findest Christ hath asked for thee.

Direction 2. A second way to engage God is by faith's expecting act; when thou hast been with God expect good from God. 'I will direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up,' Ps. 5:3. For want of this many a prayer is lost. If you do not believe, why do you pray? and if you believe, why do you not expect? By praying, you seem to depend on God; by not expecting, you again renounce your confidence and ravel out your prayer. What is this but to take his name in vain, and to play bo-peep with God? as if one that knocks at your door should, before you came to open it to him, go away and not stay to be spoken with. Oh Christian, stand to your prayer in a holy expectation of what you have begged upon the credit of the promise, and you cannot miss of the ruin of your lusts.

Question. O, but, saith the poor soul, shall not I presume to expect when I have prayed against my corruptions that God will bestow on me so great a mercy as this is?

Answer (1.) Dost thou know what it is to presume? He presumes that takes a thing before it is granted. He were a presumptuous man indeed that

should take your meat off your table who never was invited. But I hope your guest is not over-bold that ventures to eat of what you set before him. For one to break into your house, upon whom you shut the door, were presumptuous; but to come out of a storm into your house when you are so kind as to call him in, is no presumption, but good manners. And, if God opens not the door of his promise to be a sanctuary to poor humbled sinners fleeing from the rage of their lust, truly then I know none of this side heaven that can expect welcome. God hath promised to be a king, a lawgiver, to his people. Now it is no presumption in subjects to come under their princes' shadow and expect protection from them, Isa. 33:21, 22. God there promiseth he 'will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ships pass thereby.' 'For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.' God speaks to his people as a prince or a state would to their subjects. He will secure them in their traffic and merchandise from all pirates and pickroons; they shall have a free trade. Now, soul, thou art molested with many pirate lusts that infest thee and obstruct thy commerce with heaven—yea, thou hast complained to thy God what loss thou hast suffered by them; is it now presumption to expect relief from him, that he will rescue thee from them, that thou mayest serve him without fear who is thy liege-lord?

Answer (2.) You have the saints for your precedents, who, when they have been in combat with their corruptions, yea, been foiled by them, have even then acted their faith on God, and expected the ruin of those enemies which for the present have overrun them. Iniquities prevail against me, Ps. 65:3—he means his own sins and others' wrath. But see his faith. At the same time they prevailed over him he beholds God destroying of them, as appears in the very next words, 'As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.' See here, poor Christian, who thinkest thou shalt never get above deck. Holy David has a faith not only for himself, but also [for] all believers—of whose number I suppose thee one—'as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away!' And mark the ground he hath for his confidence, taken from God's choosing act, 'Blessed is the man whom thou choolest, and causest to approach unto thee,

that he may dwell in thy courts,' ver. 4. As if he had said, 'Surely he will not let them be under the power of sin or want of his gracious succour whom he sets so nigh himself.' This is Christ's own argument against Satan in the behalf of his people. 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee,' Zech. 3:2.

Answer (3.) Thou hast encouragement for this expecting act of faith from what God already hath enabled thee to do. Thou canst, if a believer indeed, through mercy say, that sin is not in that strength within thy soul as it was before thy acquaintance with Christ, his word and ways. Though thou art not what thou wouldst be, yet also thou art not what thou hast been. There was a time when sin played rex—king, in thy heart without control. Thou didst go to sin as a ship to sea before wind and tide. Thou didst dilate and spread thy affections to receive the gale of temptation. But now the tide is turned, and runs against those motions, though weakly—being but new flood; yet thou findest a secret wrestling with them, and God seasonably succouring thee, so that Satan hath not all his will on thee. Well, here is a sweet beginning, and let me tell thee, this promiseth thee a readiness in God to perfect the victory; yea, God would have thy faith improve this into a confidence for a total deliverance. 'Moses,' when he slew the Egyptian, 'supposed his brethren would have understood,' by that little hint and essay, 'how that God by his hand would deliver them,' Acts 7:25. Oh it is a bad improvement of the succours God gives us, to argue from them to unbelief: 'He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, can he give bread also?' He broke my heart, saith the poor creature, when it was a rock, a flint, and brought me home when I was walking in the pride of my heart against him; but, can he give bread to nourish my weak grace? I am out of Egypt; but can he master those giants in iron chariots that stand betwixt me and Canaan? He helped me in such a temptation; but what shall I do the next bout? Oh, do not grieve a good God with these heart-aching questions. You have 'the former rain,' why should you question 'the latter?' Benjamin was a good pawn to make old Jacob willing to go himself to Egypt. The grace which God hath already enriched thee with is a sure pledge that more is coming to it.

Direction 3. The expecting act of faith must pro-

duce another—an endeavouring act, to set the soul on work in the confidence of that succour it expects from God. When Jehoshaphat had prayed and stablished his faith on the good word of promise, then he takes the field and marches out under his victorious banner against his enemies, II Chr. 20. Go, Christian, do as he did, and speed as he sped. What David gave in council to his son Solomon, that give I to thee, 'Arise therefore, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee,' I Chr. 22:16. That faith which sets thee on work for God against thy sins as his enemies, will undoubtedly set God on work for thee against them as thine. The lepers in the gospel were cured, not sitting still but walking. 'And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed,' Luke 17:14. They met their cure in an act of obedience to Christ's command. The promise saith, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you;' the command bids, 'Mortify your members which are on earth.' Go thou and make a valiant attempt against thy lusts, upon this word of command, and in doing thy duty thou shalt find the performance of the promise. The reason of so many fruitless complaints among Christians concerning the power of their corruptions lies in one of these two miscarriages—either they endeavour without acting faith on the promise (and such indeed go at their own peril, like those bold men, Num. 14:40, who presumptuously went up the hill to fight the Canaanites, though Moses told them the Lord was not among them, thus slighting the conduct of Moses their leader, as if they needed not his help to the victory; a clear resemblance of those who go in their own strength to resist their corruptions and so fall before them)—or else they pretend to believe, but it is *ostiâ fide*—an easy faith; their faith doth not set them on a vigorous endeavour. They use faith as an eye but not as a hand; they look for victory to drop from heaven upon their heads, but do not fight to obtain it. This is a mere fiction, a fanciful faith. He that believes God for the event, believes him for the means also. If the patient dare trust the physician for the cure, he dare also follow his prescription in order to it. And therefore, Christian, sit not still, and say thy sin shall fall, but put thyself in array against it. God, who hath promised thee victory calls thee to thy arms and means to use thy own hands in the battle if ever thou gettest it. 'Get thee up,' said the Lord to Joshua, 'wherefore liest

thou thus upon thy face,' Joshua 7:10. God liked the prayer and moan he made very well; but there was something else for him to do besides praying and weeping, before the Amorites could be overcome. And so there is for thee, Christian, with thy faith to do, besides praying and expecting thy lusts down, and that is searching narrowly into thy heart, whether there be not some neglect on thy part, as an Achan, for which thou art so worsted by sin, and fleest before the face of every temptation.

FAITH'S SECOND QUENCHING POWER.

[Satan's fiery darts of AFFRIGHTING TEMPTATIONS, and faith's power to quench them.]

Having thus despatched the first kind of fiery darts—temptations which are enticing and alluring—we now proceed to the second kind—such as are of an affrighting nature, by which Satan would dismay and dispirit the Christian. And my task [in this] is still the same, to show the power of faith in quenching these fiery darts. Let then the point be this.

DOCTRINE. That faith, and only faith, can quench the fiery darts of Satan's affrighting temptations. This sort of fiery dart is our enemy's reserve. When the other, viz. pleasing temptations, prove unsuccessful, then he opens this quiver and sends a shower of these arrows to set the soul on flame, if not of sin, yet of terror and horror. When he cannot carry a soul laughing to hell through the witchery of pleasing temptations, he will endeavour to make him go mourning to heaven by amazing him with the other. And truly it is not the least support to a soul exercised with these temptations to consider they are a good sign that Satan is hard put to it when these arrows are upon his string. You know an enemy that keeps a castle will preserve it as long as he can hold it; but, when he sees he must out, then he sets it on fire, to render it, if possible, useless to them that come after him. While the strong man can keep his house under his own power, he labours to keep it in peace; he quenches those fire-balls of conviction that the Spirit is often shooting into the conscience; but, when he perceives it is no longer tenable, [when] the mutiny increases, and there is a secret whisper in the

soul of yielding unto Christ, now he labours to set the soul on fire by his affrighting temptations. Much more doth he labour to do it when Christ hath got the castle out of his hands, and keeps it by the power of his grace against him. It is very observable that all the darts shot against Job were of this sort. He hardly made any use of the other. When God gave him leave to practice his skill, why did he not tempt him with some golden apple of profit, or pleasure, or such like enticing temptations? Surely the high testimony that God gave to this eminent servant discouraged Satan from this method; yea, no doubt he had tried Job's manhood before this as to those, and found him too hard; so that now he had no other way left probable to attain his design but this. I shall content myself with three instances of this sort of fiery darts, showing how faith quenches them all—temptations to atheism, blasphemy, and despair.

[Satan's first affrighting temptation
—THE FIERY DART OF ATHEISM.]

First Dart of affrighting temptations. The first of Satan's affrighting temptations is his temptation to atheism, which, for the horrid nature thereof, may well be called a fiery dart; partly because by this he makes so bold an attempt, striking at the being of God himself; as also because of the consternation he produceth in a gracious soul wounded with it. It is true the devil, who cannot himself turn atheist, is much less able to make a child of God an atheist, who hath not only in common with other men an indelible stamp of a deity in his conscience, but such a sculpture of the divine nature in his heart, as irresistibly demonstrates a God; yea, lively represents a holy God, whose image it is; so that it is impossible a holy heart should be fully overcome with this temptation, having an argument beyond all the world of wicked men and devils themselves to prove a deity, viz. a new nature in him, 'created after God in righteousness and true holiness,' by which, even when he is buffeted with atheistical injections, he saith in his heart, 'There is a God,' though Satan in the paroxysm of his temptation, clouds his reasoning faculty for the present with this smoke of hell, which doth more offend and affright than persuade his gracious heart to espouse such a principle as it doth in a wicked man;

who, when, on the contrary, he is urged by his conscience to believe a God, 'saith in his heart there is no God,' that is, he wisheth there were none. And this may exceedingly comfort a saint—who, notwithstanding such injections to atheism, clings about God in his affections, and dares not for a world allow himself to sin against him, no, not when most oppressed with this temptation—that he shall not pass for an atheist in God's account, whatever Satan makes him believe. As the wicked shall not be cleared from atheism by their naked profession of a deity, so long as those thoughts of God are so loose and weak as not to command them into any obedience to his commands—'The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes,' Ps. 36:1; the holy prophet argues from the wickedness of the sinner's life to the atheism of his heart—so, on the contrary, the holy life of a gracious person saith in mine heart that the fear of God is before his eyes; it appears plainly that he believes a God, and reveres that God whom he believes to be. Well, though a gracious heart can never be overcome, yet he may be sadly haunted and disquieted with it. Now, in the next place, I am to show you how the Christian may quench this fiery dart, and that is by faith alone.

[How faith quenches
the fiery dart of atheism.]

Question. But what need of faith? Will not reason serve the turn to stop the devil's mouth in this point? Cannot the eye of reason spy a deity except it look through the spectacles of faith?

Answer. I grant that this is a piece of natural divinity, and reason is able to demonstrate the being of a God. Where the Scriptures never came a deity is acknowledged: 'For all people will walk every one in the name of his god,' Micah 4:5, where it is supposed that every nation owns some deity, and hath a worship for that god they own. Yet in a furious assault of temptation it is faith alone that is able to keep the field and quench the fire of this dart.

1. That light which reason affords is duskish and confused, serving for little more than in general to show there is a God; it will never tell who or what this God is. Till Paul brought the Athenians acquainted with the true God, how little of this first principle in

religion was known among them, though that city was then the very eye of the world for learning! And if the world's eye was so dark as not to know the God they worshipped, what then was the world's darkness itself—those barbarous places, I mean, which wanted all tillage and culture of humane literature to advance and perfect their understandings? This is a Scripture notion; and so is the object of faith rather than reason, 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is,' Heb. 11:6. Mark that, he 'must believe.' Now faith goes upon the credit of the word, and takes all upon trust from its authority. He 'must believe that he is;' which, as Mr. Perkins on the place saith, is not nakedly to know there is a God, but to know God to be God—which reason of itself can never do. Such is the blindness and corruption of our nature, that we have very deformed and misshapen thoughts of him, till with the eye of faith we see his face in the glass of the word; and therefore the same learned man is not afraid to affirm that all men who ever came of Adam—Christ alone excepted—are by nature atheists, because at the same time that they acknowledge a God, they deny him his power, presence, and justice, and allow him to be only what pleaseth themselves. Indeed it is natural for every man to desire to accommodate his lusts with such conceptions of God as may be most favourable to, and suit best with, them. God chargeth some for this: 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself,' Ps. 50:21—sinners doing with God as the Ethiopians with angels, whom they picture with black faces that they may be like themselves.

2. Suppose thou wert able by reason to demonstrate what God is, yet it were dangerous to enter the list and dispute it out by thy naked reason with Satan, who hath, though the worst cause, yet the nimbler head. There is more odds between thee and Satan—though the reason and understanding of many the ripest wits were met in thee—than between the weakest idiot and the greatest scholar in the world. Now who would put a cause of so great importance to such a hazard as thou must do, by reasoning the point with him that so far outmatches thee? But there is a divine authority in the word which faith builds on, and this hath a throne in the conscience of the devil himself, he flies at this; for which cause Christ, though he was able by reason to have baffled the

devil, yet to give us a pattern what arms to use for our defence in our conflicts with Satan, he repels him only by lifting up the shield of the word. 'It is written,' saith Christ, Luke 4:4, and again, 'it is written,' ver. 8. And it is very observable how powerful the word quoted by Christ was to nonplus the devil; so that he had not a word to reply to any scripture that was brought, but was taken off upon the very mention of the word and forced to go to another argument. Had Eve but stood to her first answer, 'God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it,' Gen. 3:3, she had been too hard for the devil; but letting her hand-hold go which she had by faith on the word, presently she fell into her enemy's hand. Thus in this particular, when the Christian in the heat of temptation by faith stands upon his defence, interposing the word between him and Satan's blows—I believe that God is; though I cannot comprehend his nature nor answer thy sophistry, yet I believe the report the word makes of God; Satan may trouble such a one, but he cannot hurt him. Nay, it is probable he will not long trouble him. The devil's antipathy is so great to the word, that he loves not to hear it sound in his ear. But, if thou throwest down the shield of the word, and thinkest by the dint or force of thy reason to cut thy way through the temptation, thou mayest soon see thyself surrounded by thy subtle enemy, and put beyond an honourable retreat. This is the reason, I conceive, why, among those few who have professed themselves atheists, most of them have been great pretenders to reason—such as have neglected the word, and gone forth in the pride of their own understanding, by which, through the righteous judgment of God, they at last have disputed themselves into flat atheism. While they have turned their back upon God and his word, [and] thought, by digging into the secrets and bowels of nature, to be admired for their knowledge above others, that hath befallen them which sometimes doth those in mines that delve too far into the bowels of the earth—a damp from God's secret judgment hath come to put out that light which at first they carried down with them; and so that of the apostle is verified on them, 'Where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?' I Cor. 1:20, 21. Indeed it is the wisdom of God that the world by wisdom—their own trusted to—should not know God.

3. He that assents to this truth, that there is a God, merely upon grounds of reason and not of faith, and rests in that, doth not quench the temptation; for still he is an infidel and a Scripture atheist. He doth not believe there is a God at the report of God's word, but at the report of his reason; and so indeed he doth but believe himself and not God, and in that makes himself a god, preferring the testimony of his own reason before the testimony of God's word, which is dangerous.

Question. But, may some say, is there no use of reason in such principles as this which are within its sphere? May I not make use of my reason to confirm me in this truth that there is a God?

Answer. It is beyond all doubt that there is [use of reason]. Wherefore else did God set up such a light if not to guide us? But it must keep its own place, and that is to follow faith, not to be the ground of it, or to give law and measure to it. Our faith must not depend on our reason, but our reason on faith. I am not to believe what the word saith merely because it jumps with my reason, but believe my reason because it is suitable to the word. The more perfect is to rule the less. Now the light of the word—which faith follows—is more clear or sure than reason is or can be; for therefore it was written, because man's natural light was so defective. Thou readest in the word there is a God, and that he made the world. Thy eye of reason sees this also. But thou layest the stress of thy faith on the word, not on thy reason. And so of other truths. The carpenter lays his rule to the timber, and by his eye sees it to be right or crooked; yet, it is not the eye but the rule that is the measure—without which his eye might fail him. All that I shall say more to such as are annoyed with atheistical injections is this, fix thy faith strongly on the word, by which you shall be able to overcome this Goliath, and when thou art more free and composed, and the storm is over, thou shalt do well to back thy faith what thou canst with thy reason. Let the word, like David's stone in the sling of faith, first prostrate the temptation; and then, as he used Goliath's sword to cut off his head, so mayest thou with more ease and safety make use of thy reason to complete the victory over these atheistical suggestions.

[Satan's second affrighting temptation
—THE FIERY DART OF BLASPHEMY.]

Second Dart of affrighting temptations. The second fiery dart with which he frightens the Christian is his temptation to blasphemy. Every sin, in a large sense, is blasphemy; but here we take it more strictly. When a man does, speaks, or thinks anything derogatory to the holy nature or works of God, with an intent to reproach him or his ways, this properly is blasphemy. Job's wife was the devil's solicitor, to provoke her husband to this sin: 'Curse God,' saith she, 'and die.' The devil was so impudent {as} to assault Christ himself with this sin, when he bade him 'fall down and worship him.' But he hath an advantage of making a nearer approach to a saint than he had to Christ. All that he could do to him was to offend his holy ear with an external motion. It would not stand with the dignity or holiness of Christ's person to let him come any farther. But he can shoot this fiery dart into the imagination of a saint, to the great disturbance of his thoughts, endeavouring thereby to stir up some unworthy thoughts of God in him—though these are commonly no more welcome to a gracious soul than the frogs which crept into the bed-chamber of Pharaoh were to him. Two things Satan aims at by these injections. 1. To set the saint a defaming God, which he loves a life to hear. But if this fails, then, 2. He is content to play at lower game, and intends the Christian's vexation by forcing these unwelcome guests upon him. Now faith, and only faith, can quench these fireballs in both respects.

[How faith quenches the fiery dart of blasphemy,
and Satan's DOUBLE DESIGN therein.]

First Design. Satan aims, by the stirring up of unholy thoughts, to set the saint a defaming God. There is a natural disposition in every wicked man to blaspheme God. Let God but cross a carnal wretch in this way, and then suffer Satan to edge his corruption, and he will soon flee in God's face. If the devil's supposition had been true—as it was indeed most false—that Job was a hypocrite, then that tale which he brought against him to God would have been true also—'Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face,' Job 1:11.

Had Job been the man he took him for, the devil had not lied; because it is natural to every wicked man to have base thoughts of God; and, when provoked, the inward rancour of his heart will appear in the foulness of his tongue—'This evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?' II Kings 6:33—a loud blasphemy, the seed of which is found in every unbeliever. There is but one spirit of wickedness in sinners, as but one spirit of grace in saints. Simon Magus he was 'in the gall of bitterness,' Acts 8:23; that is, in a state of sin. Every unbeliever is of a bitter spirit against God and all that bears his name. There is no trusting of the tamest of them all, though cooped up by restraining grace. Let the lion out of his grate and he will soon show his bloody nature. An unbeliever hath no more in him to quench such a temptation, than dry wood hath to quench the fire that is put to it. But now, let us see what exploits faith can do in quenching this fiery dart, and how faith does it. Generally it is by keeping the soul from entertaining any unbecoming or blasphemous thoughts of God; but,

1. Faith sets God before the soul—within sight and hearing of all its thoughts and ways; and this keeps the soul in awe, that it dares harbour nothing unworthy of God in its most secret thoughts. David gives the reason why the wicked are so bold, 'They have not set thee before them,' Ps. 54:3. Such as defame and asperse the name of others do it commonly behind their backs. Sin, in this life, seldom comes to such a ripeness as to blaspheme God to his face. This is properly the language of hell. There is a mixture of atheism with the blasphemy of sinners while on earth. They do with God as those wretched miscreants did with Christ; they cover his face and then smite him; they draw a curtain by some atheistical principles betwixt God and them, and then they belch out their blasphemies against that God whose omniscience they do not believe. Now faith eyes God eyeing the soul, and so preserves it. 'Curse not the king,' saith Solomon, 'no not in thy thought,... nor the rich in thy bedchamber; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter,' Ecc. 10:20. Such kind of language faith useth. Blaspheme not, saith faith, O my soul, the God of heaven; thou canst not whisper it so softly, but the voice is heard in his ear who is nearer to thee than thou to

thyself. And thus it breaks the snare the devil lays. Those unbeseeming speeches which dropped from Job's mouth, through the length and extremity of his troubles, though they did not amount to blasphemy, yet, when God presented himself to him in his majesty, they soon vanished, and he covered his face with shame before the Lord for them—'Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,' Job 42:5, 6.

2. Faith credits no report of God but from God's own mouth; and thus it quenches temptations to blasphemy. It is impossible that a soul should have any but holy and loyal thoughts of God, who shapes his apprehensions of him by the word of God, which is the only true glass to behold God in, because it alone presents him like himself in all his attributes, which Satan by this sin of blasphemy one way or other asperses. Faith conceives its notions of God by the word, resolves all cases of conscience, and decipheres all providences which God writes in mysterious figures, by the word; for want of which skill, Satan drives the creature very oft to have hard thoughts of God, because he cannot make presently good sense of his administrations in the world. Thus, there have been [those] who foolishly have charged God's justice, because some outrageous sinners have not been overtaken with such speedy judgment as they deserve. Others have charged as deeply his care and faithfulness in providing no better for his servants, whom they have seen kept long under the hatches of great afflictions; like him, that seeing a company of Christians in poor ragged clothes, said he would not serve that God who kept his servants no better. These, and such like, are the broken glasses that Satan presents God in, that he may disfigure him to the creature's eye; and truly if we will look no further, but judge God to be what he appears to be by them, we will soon condemn the holy One, and be within the whirl of this dangerous temptation.

3. Faith quenches temptations to blasphemy, as it is praiseful. It disposeth the Christian to bless God in the saddest condition that can befall it. Now these two, blessing and blasphemy, are most contrary. By the one we think and speak evil, and by the other good, of God; and therefore [they] cannot well dwell under the same roof. They are like contrary tunes. They cannot be played on the same instrument with-

out changing all the strings. It is past Satan's skill to strike so harsh a stroke as blasphemy is, on a soul tuned and set to praise God. Now faith doth this, 'My heart is fixed,' saith David. There was his faith. Then follows, 'I will sing and give praise,' Ps. 57:7. It was faith that turned his spirit and set his affections praise-way. And would not Satan, think you, have found it a hard task to have made David blaspheme God while his heart was kept in a praising frame? Now, two ways faith doth this.

(1.) Faith espies mercy in the greatest affliction—an eye of white in the saddest mixture of providence; so that when the devil provokes to blasphemy from the evil that the creature receives from God, faith shows more good received than evil.

Thus Job quenched this dart which Satan shot at him from his wife's tongue. 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall not we receive evil?' Shall a few present troubles be a grave to bury the remembrance of all my past and present mercies? 'Thou speakest as one of the foolish women.' What God takes from me is less than I owe him, but what he leaves me is more than he owes me. Solomon bids us, 'In the day of adversity consider,' Ecc. 7:14. Our unbeseeming thoughts and words of God are the product of a rash hasty spirit. Now faith is a considering grace; 'He that believeth will not make haste'—no not to think or speak of God. Faith hath a good memory, and can tell the Christian many stories of ancient mercies; and when his present meal falls short, it can entertain the soul with a cold dish, and not complain that God keeps a bad house neither. Thus David recovered himself when he was even tumbling down the hill of temptation. 'This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old,' Ps. 77:10, 11. Therefore, Christian, when thou art in thy depths of affliction, and Satan tempts thee to asperse God as if he were forgetful of thee, stop his mouth with this, 'No, Satan, God hath not forgot to do for me, but I have forgot what he hath done for me, or else I could not question his fatherly care at present over me!' Go, Christian, play over thy old lessons. Praise God for past mercies; and it will not be long before thou hast a new song put into thy mouth for present mercy.

(2.) As faith spies mercy in every affliction, so it keeps up an expectation in the soul for more mercy; which confidence disposeth the soul to praise God for, as if the mercy were then in being. Daniel, when in the very shadow of death—the plot the plot laid to take away his life—‘three times a day he prayed and gave thanks before his God.’ To have heard him pray in that great strait would not have afforded so much matter of wonder; but to have his heart in tune for thanksgiving in such a sad hour, this was admirable, and his faith enabled him, Dan. 6:10. Mercy in the promise is as the apple in the seed. Faith sees it growing up, the mercy a coming. Now, a soul under the expectation of deliverance, how will it scorn a blasphemous notion! When relief is known to be on its way for a garrison besieged, it raiseth their spirits; they will not then hearken to the traitorous motion of the enemy. It is when unbelief is the counsellor, and the soul under doubts and suspicions of God’s heart to it, that Satan finds welcome upon such an errand. An excellent instance for both we have in one chapter, Isa. 8. We find, ver. 17, what is the effect of faith, and that is a cheerful waiting on God in straits—‘I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him;’ and, ver. 21, we have the fruit of unbelief—and that is no less than blasphemy—‘And it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward.’ Faith keeps the believer in a waiting posture; and unbelief sets the sinner a cursing both God and man. None escapes his lash that crosseth him in his way, no, not God himself.

4. Faith quenches this fiery dart, by purifying the heart of that enmity against God which, in man’s corrupt nature, is fuel for such a temptation. ‘Backbiters, haters of God, and spiteful,’ are joined together, Rom. 1:30. No wonder that a man whose spirit is full of rancour against another, should be easily persuaded to revile him he hates so much. Every unbeliever is a hater of God, and so is in a disposition to blaspheme God when his will or lust is crossed by God. But faith slays this enmity of the heart; yea, it works love in the soul to God, and then works by this love. Now it is one property of love ‘to think no evil,’ 1 Cor. 13:5. That is, a man will neither plot any evil against him he loves, nor easily suspect any evil to be

plotted by him against himself. Love reads the actions of a friend through such clear glasses of candour and ingenuity, as will make a dark print seem a fair character. It interprets all he doth with so much sweetness and simplicity, that those passages in his behaviour towards her, which to another would seem intricate and suspicious, are plain and pleasing to her; because she ever puts the most favourable sense upon all he doth that is possible. The believer dares not himself plot any evil of sin against God, whom, from the report that faith hath made of him to his soul, he loves so dearly. And, as love will not suffer him to turn traitor against a good God, so neither will it suffer him to harbour any jealous thoughts of God’s heart towards him, as if he, who was the first lover, and taught the soul to love him by making love to her, could, after all this, frame any plot of real unkindness against it. No, this thought, though Satan may force it in a manner upon the Christian, and violently press for its entertainment, under the advantage of some frowning providence, which seems to countenance such a suspicion, yet it can never find welcome, so far as to be credited in the soul where love to God hath anything to do. And surely there is no fear that soul will be persuaded wickedly to belch out blasphemies against God, who so abominates but the surmising the least suspicion of God in her most secret thoughts.

Second Design. Satan aims by these blasphemous temptations to effect the Christian’s trouble and vexation. Though he doth not find the Christian so kind as to take these his guests in and give them lodging for his sake, yet he knows it will not a little disturb and break his rest to have them continually knocking and rapping at his door; yea, when he cannot pollute the Christian by obtaining his consent to them, even then he hopes to create him no little disquiet and distraction, by accusing him for what he will not commit; and so of a defiler—which rather he would have been—he is forced to turn slanderous reviler and false accuser. Thus the harlot sometimes accuseth the honest man, merely to be avenged on him because he will not yield to satisfy her lust. Joseph would not lie with his mistress and she raiseth a horrible lie on him. The devil is the blasphemer, but the poor Christian, because he will not join with him in the fact, shall have the name and bear the blame of it. As the Jews compelled Simon of Cyrene

to carry Christ's cross, so Satan would compel the tempted Christian to carry the guilt of his sin for him. And many time he doth so handsomely, and with such sleight of hand, shift it from himself to the Christian's back, that he, poor creature, perceives not the juggler's art of conveying it unto him, but goes complaining only of the baseness of his own heart. And as it sometimes so falls out, that a true man in whose house stolen goods are found suffers, because he cannot find out the thief that left them there; so the Christian suffers many sad terrors from the mere presence of these horrid thoughts in his bosom, because he is not able to say whose they are—whether shot in by Satan, or the steaming forth of his own naughty heart. The humble Christian is prone to fear the worst of himself, even where he is not conscious to himself; like the patriarchs, who, when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, took the blame to themselves, though they were innocent in the fact. And such is the confusion sometimes in the Christian's thoughts, that he is ready to charge himself with those brats that should be laid at another door—Satan's, I mean. Now here I shall show you how faith defeateth this second design of the devil in these blasphemous motions. And this it doth two ways. 1. By helping the Christian to discern Satan's injections from the motions of his own heart. 2. By succouring him, though they rise of his own heart.

1. Faith teaches the Christian to discern and distinguish those fireballs of temptations which are thrown in at his window by Satan, from those sparks of corruption which fly from his own hearth and take fire at his own sinful heart. And certainly those blasphemous thoughts, of which many gracious souls make such sad complaint, will be found very often of the former sort, as may the more probably appear if we consider, (1.) The time when they first stir and are most busy. (2.) The manner how they come. And, (3.) The effect they have on the Christian's heart.

(1.) The time when they begin to stir and the soul to be haunted with them; and that is ordinarily when the work of conversion hath newly passed or is passing on him. When the creature falls off from his old sinful course to embrace Christ, and declares for him against sin and Satan, this is the time when these blasphemous suggestions begin to make their apparition, and those vermin are seen to crawl in the Chris-

tian's bosom—a strong probability that they do not breed there, but are sent from Satan by way of revenge for the soul's revolt from him. The devil deals by the Christian in this, and not much unlike what his own sworn servants—witches, I mean—are known to do, who to express their spite against those that cross them, sometimes cause them to swarm with lice, or such kind of vermin, to make them loathsome to themselves. And, as one that never found such vermin crawling about him before, might well wonder to see himself so suddenly stocked with a multitude of them—yea, might rather impute it to the witch's malice than to the corruption of his own body that bred them—so in this case. Indeed, it is very improbable to think that the creature should in this juncture of time above all fall so foul with God by sinning against him at such a height as this. Is it likely that he can, while he is in tears for the sins of his past life, commit a greater than any of them he mourns for? or that he dare, while he is crying for pardoning mercy with a trembling heart, block up the way to his own prayers, and harden God's heart into a denial of them, by such horrid sins as these are? In a word, seems it not strange, that all the while he was a stranger to, yea an enemy against, God, he durst not venture on this sin for the prodigious nature of it, and that now he begins to love God those blasphemies should fit his mouth which were too big and horrid before for him to meddle with?

(2.) The manner how these blasphemies rise in the Christian's thoughts, will increase the probability that they are injections from Satan without, rather than motions of the Christian's own heart within. They are commonly violent and sudden. They come like lightning, flashing into the Christian's thoughts before he hath time to deliberate with himself what he is doing. Whereas that lust, which is the ebullition of our own hearts, is ordinarily gradual in its motion; it moves in a way more still and suitable to man's nature; it doth entice the soul, and by degrees slyly inveigles it into a consent; making first the affections on its side, which then it employeth to corrupt the understanding, and take it off from appearing against it, by putting its eye out with some bribe of sensual pleasure and profit; and so, by these paces it comes at last to have a more easy access to and success over the will, which being now deprived of her guard, yields

the sooner to the summons that lust makes. But these sudden dartings of blasphemous thoughts, they make a forcible entry upon the soul without any application used to gain its good-will to come in. Their driving is like the driving of that hellish Jehu. It is the devil that is got into the box; who else could drive so furiously? Yea, not only their suddenness and violence, but incoherence with the Christian's former thoughts and course, do still heighten the probability that they are darts shot from the devil's bow. Peter was once known to be of Christ's company by his voice: 'Thy speech,' say they, 'betrayeth thee.' He spake like them, therefore he was judged one of them. On the contrary, we may say of these blasphemous motions, 'They are not the Christian's, their language betrays them to be rather the belching of a devil than the voice of a saint. If they were woven by the soul, they would be something like the whole piece from which they are cut off.' There is ordinarily a dependency in our thoughts. We take the hint for one thought from another. As circle riseth out of circle in the moved water, so doth thought out of thought, till they spread into a discourse.

Now, may not the Christian well wonder to see—may be when he is at he worship of God, and taken up with holy and heavenly meditations—a blasphemous thought on a sudden appear in the midst of such company to which it is so great a stranger? and also how it should get in among them? If a holy thought surpriseth us on a sudden, when we stand as it were with our back on heaven, and there be nothing in the discourse our hearts at present are holding to usher it in, we may take it as a pure motion of the Spirit of Christ. Who, indeed, but he, could be so soon in the midst of the soul when the door is shut, even before the creature can turn his thoughts to open it for him? And probably these blasphemies, which rush upon thee, O Christian, at a time when thy soul is at the farthest distance from such thoughts, yea, sailing to the clean contrary point, in thy praying to and praising of God, are the irruptions of that wicked one, and that on purpose to interrupt thee in that work which of all other he fears and hates most.

(3.) The effect these blasphemous notions have on the heart may make us think they are Satan's brats rather than the birth of the Christian's own heart;—and that is a dismal horror and consternation of

the Christian's spirit, which reacheth often to the discomposure of the body. So that an apparition of the devil to their bodily eyes could not affright them more than these blasphemies do that walk in their imagination. Yea, they do not only cause a horror, but stir up a vehement indignation and abhorrency, in the soul at their presence. If now they be the birth of the Christian's own heart, why this horror? whence this indignation? Those motions which arise from ourselves use to please us better. It is natural for men to love the children of their own loins though black and deformed; and as natural to like the conceptions of their own minds. Solomon found out the true mother by her tenderness to the child. If these blasphemies were the issue of the heart, familiarity with them might be expected rather than horror at the sight of them; favour to them rather than abhorrency of them. Were it not more likely, poor soul, that thou wouldst kiss them, if thy own, than seek to kill them?—draw out thy breast to nurse and suckle them, than the sword of the Spirit to destroy them? And if so, saith faith, that these be Satan's brats, why then art thou troubled because he lays them at thy door? Is the chaste woman the more whore, because some foul tongue calls her so? Have patience a little, poor soul; the judge is at the door, and when he comes thou shalt be called by thy right name. Sit not thou any longer wounding thy soul with his dart, and troubling thyself for the devil's sin, but go and complain of him to thy God; and when thou hast spread his blasphemies before the Lord, as Hezekiah did Rabshakeh's, comfort thyself with this, that God will spread thy cause against this false accuser, and send him away with as much shame and as little success as he did that barking dog who so reviled God and railed on his people. But,

2. Suppose these blasphemous notions to be the Christian's own sins, bred in his own heart, and not the devil's brats falsely fathered on him; yet here faith relieves the Christian when distressed with the guilt of them, and Satan labours most to aggravate them. Now the succour faith brings the soul here is manifold.

(1.) Succour. Faith can assure the soul upon solid Scripture bottom that these blasphemous thoughts are pardonable. 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against

the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men,' Matt. 12:31. And it were strange if thy fancy should be so wild and melancholy as to think thou seest this only unpardonable blasphemy, which is ever marked on the forehead with final impenitency and desperate hatred against God, in those loose roving thoughts that never yet could gain any consent from thy heart to them, but continues to disavow and protest against them. I say it were very strange that thou couldst long mistake those unwelcome guests for that wicked sin. Now, for thy comfort, thou hearest all manner of blasphemy besides that one shall be forgiven. Pardon for them may be sued out in the court of mercy, how terrible and amazing soever their circumstances are to thy trembling soul. And if the creature believes this, Satan's dart is quenched; for his design is to make use of these temptations as a trap-door by which he may let thy soul down into despair.

(2.) Succour. Faith resolves the soul that the ebullition⁷ of such thoughts is not inconsistent with the state of grace; and if the soul be well satisfied in this point, the devil's fiery dart hath lost its envenomed head, which uses so much to drink up the Christian's spirits. The common inference which he makes tempted souls draw from the presence of these thoughts in them is, 'Surely I am not a saint. This is not the spot of God's children.' But faith is able to disprove this, and challenges Satan to show—as well read as he is in the Scriptures—one place in all the Bible that countenanceth such a conclusion. Indeed there is none. It is true the blasphemy of blasphemies—I mean the sin against the Holy Ghost—with this the evil one shall never touch a true believer. But I know no kind of sin, short of that, from which he hath any such protection or immunity, as makes it impossible he should for a time be foiled by it. The whole body of sin indeed is weakened in every believer, and a deadly wound given by the grace of God to his corrupt nature, which it shall never claw off, but at last die by it. Yet as a dying tree may bear some fruit, though not so much, nor that so full and ripe, as before; and a dying man may move his limbs, though not so strongly as when he was in health; so original corruption in a saint will be stirring, though but

feebly, and showing its fruit, though it be but crumpled and unripe. And thou hast no cause to be discouraged that it stirs; but to be comforted that it can but stir. O be thankful thou hast got thy enemy, who even now was master of the field, and had thee tied to his triumphant chariot, now himself on his knees under the victorious sword of Christ and his grace, ready to drop into his grave, though lifting up his hand against thee to show his enmity continues when his power fails to do execution as he would.

(3.) Succour. Faith can clear it to the soul that these blasphemous thoughts, as they are commonly entertained in a saint, are not so great sins in God's account as some other that pass for less in our account. The Christian commonly contracts more guilt by a few proud, unclean, covetous thoughts than by many blasphemous ones, because the Christian seldom gets a so clear a victory over those as over these of blasphemy. The fiery darts of blasphemy may scare Christians more, but fiery lusts wound sooner and deeper. It was the warm sun made the traveller open his cloak which the blustering wind made wrap closer to him. Temptations of pleasure entice the heart to them, whereas the horrid nature of the other stirs up the Christian to a more valiant resistance of them. O, the Christian is soon overtaken with these; they are like poison in sweet wine, they are down before he is aware, and diffuse apace into his affections, poisoning the Christian's spirits. But these of blasphemy are like poison in some bitter potion; either it is spit out before it is down, or vomited up by the Christian before it hath spread itself far into his affections. Sins are great or small by the share the will hath in the acting of them. And blasphemous thoughts, commonly having less of the Christian's will and affections in them than the other, cannot be a greater sin.

(4.) Succour. Faith tells the soul that God may have, yea, undoubtedly hath, gracious ends in suffering him to be haunted with such troublesome guests, or else they should not be sent to quarter on him. Possibly God saw some other sin thou wert in great danger of, and he sends Satan to trouble thee with these temptations, that he may not overcome thee in the other. And though a plaster or poultice be very offensive and loathsome, yet better endure that a while than a disease that will hazard thy life. Better

7. ebullition; violent boiling over. — SDB

tremble at the sight of blasphemous thoughts than strut thyself in the pride of thy heart at the sight of thy gifts and privileges. The first will make thee think thyself as vile as the devil himself in thy own eyes; but the other will make thee prodigiously wicked and so indeed like the devil in God's eyes.

(5.) Succour. Faith will put the Christian on some noble exploits for God, thereby to vindicate himself, and prove the devil's charge a lie, as one that is accused for some traitorous design against his prince, to wipe off that calumny doth undertake some notable enterprise for the honour of his prince. This indeed is the fullest revenge the Christian can take either of Satan for troubling him with such injections, or [of] his own heart for issuing out such impure streams. When David preferred Saul's life in the cave above a kingdom, which one hearty blow might have procured him, he proved all his enemies liars that had brought him under a suspicion at court. Thus, Christian, do thou but prefer the honour of God when it cometh in competition with sin and self, and thou wilt stop the devil's mouth, who is sometimes ready to make thee jealous of thyself as if thou wert a blasphemer. Such heroic acts of zeal and self-denial would speak more for thy purgation before God and thy own conscience than these sudden thoughts can do against thee.

[Satan's third affrighting temptation
—THE FIERY DART OF DESPAIR.]

Third Dart of affrighting temptations. The third fiery dart which Satan lets fly at the Christian is his temptation to despair. This cursed fiend thinks he can neither revenge himself further on God, nor engrave his own image deeper on the creature, than by this sin; which at once casteth the greatest scorn upon God, and brings the creature nearest the complexion of devils and damned souls, who, by lying continually under the scorching wrath of God, in hell's horrid zone, are blacked all over with despair. This is the sin that of all Satan chiefly aims at. Other sins are but as previous dispositions to introduce that, and make the creature more receptive for such a temptation. As the wool hath a tincture of some lighter colours given it before it can be dyed into a deep grain, so Satan hath his more lightsome and pleasant sins,

which he at first entices to, that he may the better dispose the creature to this. But this is kept by him as a great secret from the creature's knowledge. The devil is too cunning a fowler to lay his net in the bird's sight he means to take. Despair is the net. Other sins are but the shrap, whereby he covers it, and so flatters them into it, which done, he hath them safe to eternity. This, above all sins, puts a man into a kind of actual possession of hell. Other sins bind over to wrath, whereby he covers it, but this gives fire to the threatening, and sets the soul on a light flame with horror. As it is faith's excellency to give a being to the word of promise; so it is the cruelty of despair that it gives an existence to the torments of hell in the conscience. This is the arrow that drinks up the spirit, and makes the creature executioner to itself. Despair puts a soul beyond all relief; the offer of a pardon comes too late to him that hath turned himself off the ladder. Other temptations have their way to escape. Faith and hope can open a window to let out the smoke that offends the Christian in any condition, be it at present never so sad and sorrowful; but then the soul must needs be choked, when it is shut up within the despairing thoughts of its own sins, and no crevice left to be an outlet to any of that horror with which they fill him.

How faith quenches the fiery dart of
despair drawn from THE GREATNESS OF SIN.]

I might here instance in those many media or arguments Satan useth to dispute souls into despair from, and how able faith, and only faith, is to answer and refel⁸ them. But I shall content myself with one to dilate upon—which is the chief of all Satan's strength—and that is taken from all the greatness and multitude of the creature's sins. This when the creature is enlightened to see, and hath the brawniness of its conscience pared off to feel with remorse, and then God but do allow Satan to use his rhetoric in declaiming against the heinousness of them, it must needs be in a doleful condition, and of necessity sink into the depths of despair, for all the help it can find from itself within or any other creature without doors.

8. Refel; an obsolete term meaning to reject, repulse.

Perhaps some of you, who have slighty thoughts of your own sins, think it proves but a childish impotent spirit in others to be so troubled for theirs; and in this you show that you never were in Satan's stocks pinched by his temptations. Those who have will speak in another language, and tell you that the sins which are unfelt by you have lain like a mountain of lead upon their spirits. O, when a breach is once made in the conscience, and the waves of guilt pour in amain upon the soul, it soon overtops all the creature's shifts and apologies, as the flood did the old world, that covered the tallest trees and the highest mountains. As nothing then was visible but sea and heaven; so in such a soul, nothing but sin and hell. His sins stare him on the face, as with the eyes of so many devils, ready to drag him into the bottomless pit. Every silly fly dares creep upon the lion while asleep, whose voice all the beasts in the forest tremble at when he awakes. Fools can make a mock of sin when conscience' eye is out or shut. They can then dance about it, as the Philistines about blind Samson. But when God arms sin with guilt, and causeth this serpent to put forth his sting upon the conscience, then the proudest sinner of them all flees before it. Now it is faith that alone can grapple with sin in its strength; which it doth several ways. First. Faith gives the soul a view of the great God. Second. Faith quenches this fiery dart of despair drawn from the greatness of sin, by opposing to that the greatness of the promises. Third. Faith teaches the soul to oppose the greatness of this one sin of despair to the greatness of all its other sins.

[To the greatness of sin, faith opposes
A VIEW OF THE GREAT GOD.]

First. Faith gives the soul a view of the great God. It teacheth the soul to set his almightiness against sin's magnitude, and his infinitude against sin's multitude; and so quencheth temptation. The reason why the presumptuous sinner fears so little, and the despairing soul so much, is for want of knowing God as great. Therefore, to cure them both, the serious consideration of God under this notion is propounded. 'Be still, and know that I am God,' Ps. 46:10. As if he had said, 'Know, O ye wicked, that I am God, who can avenge myself when I please upon

you, and cease to provoke me by your sins to your own confusion.' Again, 'Know ye, trembling souls, that I am God, and therefore able to pardon the greatest sins; and cease to dishonour me by your unbelieving thoughts of me.' Now faith alone can thus show God to be God. Two things are required to the right conceiving of God.

1. In order to the right conceiving of God, we must give him the infinitude of all his attributes; that is, conceive of him not only as wise—for that may be a man's name—but infinitely wise; not mighty, but almighty, &c.

2. This infinitude which we give to God, we must deny to all besides him, what or whosoever they be. Now faith alone can realize and fix this principle so in the heart that the creature shall act suitably thereunto. Indeed, none are so wicked who will not say, if you will believe them, that they believe that God is infinite in his knowledge, and omnipresent—at their heels wherever they go; infinite in his power, needing no more to effect their ruin than his speaking it. But, would they then in the view of these go and sin so boldly? They durst as well run their heads into a fiery oven, as do it in the face of such a principle. So others; they believe God is infinite in mercy. But, would they then carry a hell flaming in their bosoms with despair, while they have infinite mercy in their eye? No, it is plain God appears not in his true greatness to such. Despair robs God of his infinitude and ascribes it to sin. By it the creature saith his sin is infinite and God is not—too like those unbelieving Israelites: 'They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea,' Ps. 106:7. They could not see enough in God to serve their turn in such a strait; they saw a multitude of Egyptians to kill, and multitude of waters to drown them, but could not see multitude enough of mercies to deliver them. Thus the despairing sees multitude of great sins to damn, but not an infinitude of mercy to save him. Reason, alas! is low of stature, like Zaccheus, and cannot see mercy in a crowd and press of sins. It is faith alone that climbs the promise; then and not till then will the soul see Jesus. Faith ascribes mercy to God with an overplus, 'He will abundantly pardon,' Isa. 55:7—multiply to pardon, so the Hebrew. He will drop pardons with our sins which are most. 'He will subdue our

iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea'. This is faith's language; he will pardon with an overflowing mercy. Cast a stone into the sea, and it is not barely covered, but buried many fathom deep. God will pardon thy greatest sins, saith faith, as the sea doth a little pebble thrown into it. A few sins poured out upon the conscience—like a pail of water spilt upon the ground—seems like a great flood; but the greatest poured into the sea of God's mercy are swallowed up and not seen. Thus, when 'the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for,' the Scripture saith, 'and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.' And why so? 'For I will pardon,' Jer. 50:20. There is the reason.

Objection. 'O but,' saith the trembling soul, 'the consideration of God's infinitude, especially in TWO OF HIS ATTRIBUTES, drives me fastest to despair. Of all other my perplexed thoughts, when I think how infinitely holy God is, may I not fear what will become of an unholy wretch? When again, I look upon him as just, yea, infinitely just, how can I think he will remit so great wrongs as I have done to his glorious name?'

Answer. Faith will, and none but faith's fingers can, untie this knot, and give the soul a satisfactory answer to this question.

1. Attribute.—The holiness of God. For this attribute faith hath two things to answer.

Answer. (1.) That though the infinite holiness of God's nature doth make him vehemently hate sin, yet the same doth strongly incline his heart to show mercy to sinners. What is it in the creature that makes him hard-hearted but sin? 'The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel,' Prov. 12:10. If wicked then cruel, and the more holy the more merciful. Hence it is that acts of mercy and forgiveness are with so much difficulty drawn, many times, from those that are saints; even like milk out of awarded breast; because there are remainders of corruption in them, which cause some have hardness of heart and unwillingness to that work. 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good,' Rom. 12:21—implying it is a hard work, which cannot be done till a victory be got over the Christian's own heart; which hath contrary passions, that will strongly oppose such an act. How oft, alas! do we hear such language as this from those that are gracious! 'My patience is spent; I can bear

no longer, and forgive no more.' But God, who is purity without dross, holiness without the least alloy and mixture of sin, hath nothing to sour his heart into any unmercifulness. 'If ye then, being evil,' saith Christ, 'know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' Matt. 7:11. Christ's design in this place is to help them to larger apprehensions concerning the mercifulness of God's heart; which that he may do, he directs them to the thoughts of his holiness as that which would infallibly demonstrate the same. As if Christ had said, 'Can you persuade your hearts, distempered with sinful passions, to be kind to your children? how much more easy is it to think that God, who is holiness itself, will be so to his poor creatures prostrate at his feet for mercy?'

(2.) Faith can tell the soul that the holiness of God is no enemy to pardoning mercy; for it is the holiness of God that obligeth him to be faithful in all his promises. And this, indeed, is as full a breast of consolation as I know any to a poor trembling soul. When the doubting soul reads those many precious promises which are made to returning sinners, why doth he not take comfort in them? Surely it is because the truth and faithfulness of God to perform them is yet under some dispute in his soul. Now the strongest argument that faith hath to put this question out of doubt, and make the sinner accept the promise as a true and faithful word, is that which is taken from the holiness of God, who is the promiser. It must be true, saith faith, what the promise speaks; it can be no other, because a holy God makes it. Therefore, God, to gain the more credit to the truth of his promise in the thoughts of his people, prefixeth so often this attribute to his promise, 'I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,' Isa. 41:14 That which in the Hebrew is mercies, in the Septuagint is often τὰ ὁσία—holy things. See Isa. 55:3. Indeed the mercies of God are founded in holiness, and therefore are sure mercies. The reason of man's unfaithfulness in promises proceeds from some unholiness in his heart. The more holy a man is, the more faithful we may expect him to be. A good man, we say, will be as good as his word. To be sure a good God will. How many times did Laban change Jacob's wages after promise? But God's

covenant with him was inviolably kept, though Jacob was not so faithful on his part as he ought—and why? but because he had to do with a holy God in this, but with a sinful man in the other, whose passions altered his thoughts and changed his countenance towards him; as we see the clouds and wind do the face of the heavens and temper of the seasons.

2. Attribute. We come to the second attribute which scares the tempted soul, and seems so little to befriend this pardoning act of God's mercy; and that is his justice. This proves often matter of amazement to the awakened sinner rather than encouragement, especially when the serious thoughts of it possess his heart. Indeed, my brethren, the naked consideration of this attribute rent from the other, and the musing on it without a gospel-comment—through which alone it can be safely and comfortably viewed by a sin-smitten soul—must needs appall and dispirit him, whoever he be, yea, kindle a fire of horror in his bosom; for the creature, seeing no way that God hath to vindicate his provoked justice but by the eternal destruction and damnation of the sinner, cannot, without a universal consternation of all the powers of his soul, think of that attribute which brings to his thoughts so fearful an expectation and looking for of judgment. Heman, though a holy man, yet even lost his wits with musing on this sad subject. 'While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted,' Ps. 88:15, 16. But faith can make good work of this also. Faith will enable the soul to walk in this fiery attribute with his comforts unsunged, as those three worthies, Dan. 3, in the flaming furnace; while unbelieving sinners are scorched, yea, swallowed up into despair, when they do but come in their thoughts near the mouth of it. There is a **THREEFOLD CONSIDERATION** with which faith relieves the soul when the terror of this attribute takes hold on it. (1.) Faith shows, and this on the best evidence, that God may pardon the greatest sinner, if penitent and believing, without the least prejudice to his justice. (2.) Faith goes farther, and shows that God, in pardoning the believing sinner, doth not only save his justice, but advance the honour of it. (3.) Faith shows that God doth not only save and advance his justice in pardoning a believing soul; but, as things stand now, he hath no other way to secure his justice but by pardoning the believing soul his sins. Be they never so great. These three well digested, will

render this attribute as amiable, lovely, and comfortable to the thoughts of a believer, as that of mercy itself.

[A threefold consideration with which faith relieves the soul from terror of God's justice.]

Consideration 1. Faith shows to the soul—and that upon the best evidence—that God may pardon its sins, though never so great and mountainous, with safety to the justice of God. That question is not now to be disputed, whether God can be just and righteous in pardoning sinners. This, saith faith, was debated and determined long ago, at the council-board of heaven by God himself, before so much as a vote, yea, a thought, could pass from God's heart for the benefit of poor sinners. God expreseth thus much in the promise: 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment,' Hosea 2:19. Who is this that God means to marry? one that had played the whore, as appears by the former part of the chapter. What doth he mean by betrothing? No other but that he will pardon their sins, and receive them into the arms of his love and peculiar favour. But how can the righteous God take one that hath been a filthy strumpet into his bosom?—betroth such a whorish people, pardon such high-climbing sins? How? Mark, he will do it 'in judgment and in righteousness.' As if God had said, 'Trouble not your thoughts to clear my justice in the act. I know what I do. The case is well weighed by me. It is not like the sudden matches that are huddled up by men in one day, and repented of on the next; but is the result of the counsel of my holy will so to do.' Now when Satan comes full mouth against the believer with this objection, 'What! such a wretch as thou find favour in the eyes of God?' faith can easily retort, 'Yes, Satan, God can be as righteous in pardoning me as in damning thee. God tells me it is 'in judgment and in righteousness.' I leave thee therefore to dispute this case out with God, who is able to justify his own act.'

Now, though this in the lump were enough to re-
fel Satan, yet faith is provided with a more particular evidence, for the vindication of the justice and righteousness of God in this pardoning act. And this is founded on the full satisfaction which Christ hath

given to God for all the wrong the believer hath done him by his sin. Indeed, it was the great undertaking of Christ to bring justice to kiss mercy, that there might not be a dissenting attribute in God when this vote should pass, but the act of pardoning mercy carried clear, nullo contradicente—without a dissentient voice. Therefore, Christ, before he solicits the sinner's cause with God by request, performs first the other of satisfaction by sacrifice. He pays, and then prays for what he hath paid—presenting his petition in the behalf of believing sinners written with his own blood, that so justice might not disdain to read or grant it. I will not dispute whether God could by a prerogative mercy, without a satisfaction, have issued out an act of pardon; but in this way of satisfaction, the righteousness of God, I am sure, may be vindicated in the conscience of the greatest sinner on earth; yea, the devil himself is but a faint disputant when faith pinches him with this argument; it is a trench which he is not able to climb. Indeed, God laid our salvation in this method, that even we weak ones might be able to justify him, in justifying us, to the head of the most malicious devil in hell. Peruse that incomparable place, which hath balm enough in it to heal the wounds of all the bleeding consciences in the world, where there is but faith to drop it in; and for ever to quench the fire of this dart, which is headed with the justice of God. 'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,' Rom. 3:24-26. O what work will faith make of this scripture! A soul castled with these walls is impregnable.

(a) Observe, Christ is here called a propitiation, or, if you will, a propitiatory—*ἰλαστήριον*—alluding to the mercy-seat, where God promised to meet his people that he might converse with them, and no dread from his majesty fall upon them, Ex. 25. Now, you know, the mercy-seat was placed over the ark, to be a cover thereunto, it being the ark wherein the holy law of God was kept, from the violation of which all the fears of a guilty soul arise. Therefore it is observable that the dimensions of the one were propor-

tioned to the other. The mercy-seat was to be as long and broad to the full as the ark was, that no part thereof might be unshadowed by it, ver. 10, compared with ver. 17. Thus, Christ our true propitiatory covers all the law, which else would come in to accuse the believer; but not one threatening now can arrest him, so long as this screen remains for faith to interpose between God's wrath and the soul. Justice now hath no mark to level at. God cannot see the sinner for Christ that hides him. 'this is not the man,' saith wrath, 'that I am to strike. See how he flees to Christ, and takes sanctuary in his satisfaction, and so is got out of my walk and reach, that being a privileged place where I must not come to arrest any.' It is usual, you know, in battles to wear a riband, handkerchief, or some such thing, to distinguish friends from foes. Christ's satisfaction worn by faith is the sign that distinguisheth God's friends from his enemies. The scarlet thread on Rahab's window kept the destroying sword out of her house; and the blood of Christ, pleaded by faith, will keep the soul from receiving any hurt at the hands of divine justice.

(b) Observe what hand Christ hath his commission from: 'whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.' Christ, we see, is the great ordinance of heaven; him the Father hath sealed; he is singled out from all others, angels and men, and set forth as the person chosen of God to make atonement for sinners, as the lamb was taken out of the flock and set apart for the passover. When, therefore, Satan's sets forth the believer's sins in battle-array against him, and confronts him with their greatness, then faith runs under the shelter of this castle into the holes of this rock. Surely, saith faith, my Saviour is infinitely greater than my greatest sins. I should impeach the wisdom of God's choice to think otherwise. God, who knew what a heavy burden he had to lay upon his shoulders, was fully satisfied of his strength to bear it. He that refused sacrifice and burnt-offering for their insufficiency, would not have called him had he not been all-sufficient for the work. Indeed, here lies the weight of the whole building; a weak faith may save, but a weak saviour cannot. Faith hath Christ to plead for it, but Christ hath none to plead for him. Faith leans on Christ's arm, but Christ stood upon his own legs, and if he had sunk under the burden of our sins, he had been

past the reach of any creature in heaven or earth to help him up.

(c) Observe the why God chose this way of issuing out his pardoning mercy; and that is 'to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.' Mark! not to declare his mercy. That is obvious to every eye. Every one will believe him merciful that is forgiving. But, to conceive how God should be righteous in forgiving sinners—this lies more remote from the creature's apprehensions, and therefore it is ingeminated and repeated, 'To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,' ver. 26. As if God had said, 'I know why it seems so incredible, poor sinners, to your thoughts, that I should pardon all your iniquities, so great and many. You think, because I am a righteous God, that I will sooner damn a thousand worlds of sinners than asperse my justice, and bring my name under the least suspicion of unrighteousness, and that thought is most true. I would indeed damn them over and over again, rather than stain the honour of my justice—which is myself. But I declare, yea, again I declare it, and command you and the greatest sinners on earth, upon pain of damnation, to believe it, that I can be just, and yet the justifier of those sinners who believe in Jesus.' O what boldness may the believer take at this news! Methinks I see the soul that was even now pining to death with despair, and lotting upon hell in his thoughts—as one already free among the dead—now revive and grow young again at these tidings; as Jacob, when he heard Joseph was alive. 'What? Is justice—the only enemy I feared, and attribute in God's heart which my thoughts fled from—now become my friend! Then cheer up, my soul, who shall condemn if God justifies? And how can God himself be against thee, when his very justice acquits thee?'

Objection. But Satan will not thus leave the soul. Dost thou, poor creature, saith he, believe this strange divinity? Is it just for God to pardon thee for the satisfaction that another makes? One man commit the murder, and another man that is innocent hanged for it!—call, you this just? The law demands the person sinning to be delivered up to justice. We find no mention of a surety to be allowed by the covenant: 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'

Answer (a). Faith teaches the soul to acquiesce in the declaration that God makes of his own mind. Now, though the threatening at first acquaints us with the sinner's name only, yet faith finds a gracious relaxation of that threatening in the gospel covenant, where, to the believer's everlasting comfort, God promiseth to accept the sinner's debt at Christ's hand, whom therefore we find arrested upon our action. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed,' Isa. 53:5. Here is bottom strong enough for faith to rest on. And why should we, shallow creatures, ruffle gospel truths, to the ensnaring our own thoughts, by thinking to fathom the bottomless depths of God's justice with the short cordage of our reason, which we see dunced by the meanest piece of God's work of creation? Faith spies a devil in this beautiful serpent, Reason, which, for its smooth tongue, Satan useth on a mischievous design to undermine, as other, so in particular, this one most sweet and fundamental truth of the gospel—I mean the satisfaction of Christ; and therefore faith protests against the illegality of reason's court. What indeed hath reason to call before her lower bench these mysteries of our faith, that are purely supernatural, and so not under her cognizance? And O that those, in this proud age of ours, would consider it, who go to law, as I may so say, with the highest gospel truths, before this heathen judge, Reason! whereby they evacuate one great end of the gospel, which is to sacrifice our shallow reason on faith's altar, that so we might give the more signal honour to the truth of God, in believing the high mysteries of the gospel upon this naked report of them in the word, though our own reason with its little span cannot comprehend them.

Answer (b). The believer can clear God as just in receiving the debt as Christ's hand, from that near union that is betwixt Christ and his people. The husband may lawfully be arrested for his wife's debt, because this union is voluntary; and it is to be supposed he did, or ought to have considered, what her estate was, before he contracted so near a relation to her. A suit may justly be commenced against a surety, because it was his own act to engage for the debt. To be sure Christ was most free in engaging himself in the sinner's cause. He knew what a sad plight man's

nature was in; and he had an absolute freedom to please himself in his choice, whether he would leave man to perish, or lend his helping hand towards his recovery. He had also an absolute power of his own life, which no mere creature hath; so that being his own offer—upon his Father's call—to take our nature in marriage, thereby to interest himself in our debt, and for the payment of it, to disburse and pour out his own precious blood to death; how dare proud flesh call the justice of God to the bar, and bring his righteousness in this transaction into question, for which God promised himself the highest expression of love and thankfulness at his creature's hands?

Consideration 2. Faith doth not only bear witness to the justice of God, that he may pardon a poor believing sinner, and yet be just; but it shows that he may advance the honour of his justice by pardoning the believing soul, more than in damning the impenitent sinner. And surely God had no less design in the gospel-covenant than this. He that would not the death of a sinner but to vindicate his justice, would not certainly have consented to the death of his only Son, but for the higher advance and further glorifying of his justice in the eye of his creature. Christ saith he came not only that we sinners 'might have life,' but that we might 'have it more abundantly,' John 10:10—that is, more abundantly than we should have inherited it from innocent Adam. May we not therefore say, that Christ did not die that God might only have his due debt, but that he might have it more abundantly paid by Christ, than he could have had it at the creature's hands? But more particularly the justice of God will appear here clothed with four glorious circumstances, that cannot be found in the payment which the sinner by his own personal sufferings makes unto it.

(a) If we consider the person at whose hand divine justice receives satisfaction. When the sinner is damned for his own sins, it is but a poor sorry creature that is punished; but, when Christ suffereth, the debt is paid by a more honourable hand: God hath it from one who is near to himself, yea, equal with himself. 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts,' Zech. 13:7. Who will not say a judge gives more eminent testimony of his justice, when he condemns his own son, than when he arraigns a stranger? Here

God indeed declared his utmost hatred to sin, and inflexible love to justice, in that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.

(b) If we consider the manner how the debt is paid. When the sinner is damned, it is in a poor beggarly way by retail; now a few pence, and then a few more. He is ever paying, but never comes to the last farthing, and therefore must for ever lie in prison for non-payment. But, at Christ's hands God receives all the whole debt in one lump, so that Christ could truly say, 'It is finished,' John 19:30—as much as if he had said, There are but a few moments, and the work of redemption will be finished. I ave the sum now in my hand to pay God his whole debt, and as soon as I have bowed my head, and the breath is once out of my body, all will be finished. Yea, he hath his discharge for the receipt of the whole sum due to God's justice from the mouth of God himself, in which we find him triumphing. 'He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me?' Isa. 50:8. Yea, still more, Christ hath not only discharged the old debt, but by the same blood hath made a new purchase of God for his saints; so that God, who was even now the creditor, is become the debtor to his creature, and that for no less than eternal life, which Christ hath paid for, and given every believer authority, humbly to claim of God in his name. See them both in one place. 'But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,' Heb. 10:12-14. He hath not only crossed the debt-book for believers, but perfected them for ever; that is, made as certain provision for their perfection in glory, as for their salvation from hell's punishment. From which he exhorts them to 'draw near in full assurance of faith,' ver. 22. Let us not fear but we shall receive at God's hands what Christ hath paid for.

(c) When God damns the sinner, his justice indeed appears—those condemned miscreants have not one righteous syllable to charge their judge withal—but mercy is not seen to sit so glorious on the throne, in this sentence pronounced on the sinner. But when Christ suffered, justice and mercy met. Indeed justice appears never more orient in God or man than when it is in conjunction with mercy. Now

in the Lord Christ's death they shone both in all their glory, and did mutually set off each the other. Here the white and the red—the roses and the lilies—were so admirably tempered, that it is hard to say which presents the face of justice most beautiful to our eye, God's wrath upon Christ for us, or his mercy to us for his sake.

(d) When God damns the sinner, justice is glorified only passively. God forceth his glory from devils and damned souls; but they do not willingly pay the debt. They acknowledge God just, because they can do no other, but at the same time they hate him, while they seem to vindicate him. Now, in the satisfaction that Christ gives, justice is glorified actively, and that both from Christ—who was not dragged to the cross, or hauled to his sufferings, as the damned are to their prison and torment, but 'gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God,' Eph. 5:2; suffering as willingly for us as ever we sinned against him—and also from believing souls, who now sing praises to the mercy and justice of God that redeemed them, and will for ever in heaven run division on the same note. Now by how much the voluntary sufferings of Christ are better than the forced torments of the damned; and the cheerful praises of the saints in heaven more melodious in God's ear than the extorted acknowledgments of damned souls in hell; by so much the justice of God is more glorified by Christ's sufferings than theirs. O what incomparable boldness may this send the soul withal to the throne of grace—who, when he is begging pardon for Christ's sake, may, without any hazard to his eternal salvation, say, 'Lord, if my damnation will glorify thy justice more, or so much, as the death of Christ for me hath done, and the everlasting praises which my thankful heart shall resound in heaven to the glory of all thy attributes for my salvation, will do, let me have that rather than this.'

Consideration 3. Faith doth not only see justice preserved, yea, advanced in this act of pardoning mercy; but it will tell the soul, and can make good what it saith, that God, as things now stand, cannot be just, if he doth not pardon the sins of a repenting, believing soul, how great soever they have been. One great part of justice consists in a faithful and punctual performance of promises; he is, we say, a just man that keeps his word. And, can God be a just God if he

doth not? The word is gone out of his mouth that he will forgive such. Yea, he is willing to be accounted just or unjust by us, as he makes performance thereof. See where he lays this his attribute to pawn upon this very account—'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,' 1 John 1:9. He doth not say merciful, but 'just,' as the attribute which we most fear should vote against us. This he would have us know is bound for the performance of the promise. It was mercy in God to make the promise; but justice to perform what mercy hath promised. 'Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham,' Micah 7:20. God was not bound to make a promise to Abraham and his seed; but having once passed his word to him, it was 'truth to Jacob,' who was heir to that bond which God had left in his father's hand.

[To the greatness of sin faith opposes
THE GREATNESS OF THE PROMISES.]

Second. Faith quenches this temptation to despair, drawn from the greatness of sin, by opposing the greatness of the promises to sin's greatness. Faith only can see God in his greatness; and therefore none but faith can see the promises in their greatness, because the value of promises is according to the worth of him that makes them. Hence it comes to pass that promises have so little efficacy on an unbelieving heart, either to keep from sin, or to comfort under terror for sin. Promises are like the clothes we wear, which, if there be heat in the body to warm them, then they will warm us; but if they receive no heat from the body, they give none to it. Where there is faith to chase the promise, there the promise will afford comfort and peace abundantly; it will be as a strong cordial glowing with inward joy in the creature's bosom; but on a dead unbelieving heart it lies cold and ineffectual; it hath no more effect on such a soul than a cordial which is poured sown a dead man's throat hath on him. The promises have not comfort actually and formally as fire hath heat; then it were only going to them, and we should be warm, taking them up in our thoughts and we should be comforted; but virtually as fire is in the flint, which requires some labour and art to strike it out and draw

it forth. Now none but faith can learn us this skill of drawing out the sweetness and virtue of the promise, which it doth these three ways among many others:—1. Faith leads the soul to the spring-head of the promises, where it may stand with best advantage to take a view of their greatness and preciousness. 2. Faith attends to the end of the promises, which gives a further prospect of their greatness. 3. Faith presents the Christian with a cloud of witnesses to which the promise hath been fulfilled, and these as great sinners as himself.

[THREE WAYS by which faith teaches the soul to draw out the virtue of the promises.]

1. Way. Faith leads the soul to the spring-head of the promises, where it may stand with best advantage, to take a view of their greatness and preciousness. Indeed we understand little of things till we trace them to their originals and can see them lying in their causes. Then a soul will know his sins to be great when he sees them in their spring and source flowing from an envenomed nature that teems with enmity against God. Then the sinner will tremble at the threatenings which roll like thunder over his head, ready to fall every moment in some judgment or other upon him, when he sees from whence they are sent; the perfect hatred that God bears to sin, and infinite wrath with which he is inflamed against the sinner for it. In a word, then the poor trembling soul will not count the consolation of the promises small when it sees from what fountain it flows—the bosom of God’s free mercy. This indeed is the original source of all promises. The covenant itself, which comprehends them all is called ‘mercy,’ because the product of mercy. ‘To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant,’ Luke 1:72. Now, saith faith, if the promises flow from the sea of God’s free mercy, then they must needs be infinite as he is, boundless and bottomless as that is; so that to reject the promise, or question the sufficiency of the provision made in it upon this account, because thy sins are great or many, casts a dishonourable reflection on that mercy, in whose womb the promise was conceived; and God will certainly bring his action of defamation against thee, for aspersing this his darling attribute, which he can least endure to

see slandered and traduced. God makes account you have done your worst against him, when once you report him to be unmerciful or but scant in his mercy. How great a sin this is may be conceived by the thoughts which God hath of this disposition and frame of spirit in his creature. An unmerciful heart is such an abomination before the Lord that it hath few like it. This lies at the bottom of the heathen’s charge, as the sediment and grossest part of all their horrid sins—they were ‘implacable, unmerciful,’ Rom. 1:31. Now, to attribute that to God which he so abhors in his creature, must needs make a heart tender of the good name of God to tremble and exceedingly fear. It was a dreadful punishment that God brought upon Jehoram, king of Judah, whom he ‘smote in his bowels with an incurable disease,’ that after two years’ torment his very bowels fell out, II Chr. 21:18, 19. And why did this sore and heavy plague befall him? Surely to let him know his want of bowels of mercy to his brethren and princes, whom he most cruelly butchered. He had not bowels in his heart, and he shall therefore have none in his body. Now, darest thou, saith faith, impute want of bowels to God, that he will not show mercy to thee, who penitently seeks it in Christ’s name, when thou seest what testimony he gives of his incensed wrath against those men who have hardened their bowels against their brethren, yea, their enemies? O, have a care of this. To shut thy own bowels of compassion from thy brother in need is a grievous sin, and brings it into question whether the love of God dwells in thee, I John 3:17; but, to asperse the merciful heart of God, as if his bowels of compassion were shut against a poor soul in need, that desires to repent and return, is transcendently the greater abomination, and it puts out of all question—where it is persisted in—that the love of God dwells not in him. It is impossible that love to God should draw such a misshapen portraiture of God as this is.

2. Way. Faith attends to the end of the promises, which give a further prospect of their greatness. Now a word, which is the light faith goes by, discovers a double end of promises, especially of the promise of pardoning mercy.

(1.) End. The exalting and magnifying the riches of free grace, which God would have appear in all its glory—so far, I mean, as it is possible to be exposed

to the creature's view; for the full sight of God's glory is an object adequate to his own eye and none else. See this counsel and mysterious design sweetly opened, Eph. 1:6, 9, 11, 12. The sums of it all will amount to this, that God in himself hath taken up a purpose of pardoning and saving a company of poor sinners for Christ's sake; and this he hath promulgated in the promises of the gospel. And the plot of all is, that he might gather these all together at last in heaven—some of which are already there, others of them at present on earth, and some yet unborn—and, when they shall all meet together in one glorious choir, that there they may, by their triumphant songs and hallelujahs, fill the heavens with praiseful acclamations of thankfulness to the glory of that mercy which hath thus pardoned and saved them. Now, faith observing the praise of God's mercy to be the end aimed at by him in the promise, comes with good news to the trembling soul, and tells it that if God will be but true to his own thoughts, and keep his eye on that mark where at first he hath set it, impossible it is that he should reject any poor penitent sinner merely for the greatness of the sins he hath committed.

It is the exaltation of his mercy, saith faith, that God hath in his eye, when he promiseth pardon to poor sinners. Now, which exalts this most? to pardon little or great sinners? Whose voice will be highest and shrillest in the song of praise, thinkest thou? Surely his to whom most is forgiven; and therefore God cannot but be most ready to pardon the greatest sinners when truly penitent. A physician that means to be famous will not send away those that most need his skill and art, and only practise upon such diseases as are slight and ordinary. They are the great cures which ring far and near. When one, given over by himself and others as a dead man, is, by the skill and care of a physician, rescued out of the jaws of death that seemed to have inclosed him, and raised to health; this commends him to all that hear of it, and gains him more reputation than a whole year's practice in ordinary cures. The great revenue of praise is paid into God's exchequer from those who have had great sins pardoned. He that hath five hundred pence forgiven will love more than he that hath but fifty, by Christ's own judgment, Luke 7:43. And where there is most love there is like to be most praise;—love and praise being symbolical, the one resolving into the

other. The voice of a Manasseh, a Magdalene, and a Paul, will be heard, as I may so say, above all the rest in heaven's concert. The truth is, greatness of sin is so far from putting a bar to the pardoning of a penitent sinner in God's thoughts; that he will pardon none—how little sinners soever they have been—except they see and acknowledge their sins to be great, before they come to him on such an errand. And therefore he useth the law to make way, by its convictions and terrors on the conscience, for his pardoning mercy, to ascend the throne in the penitent sinner's heart with the more magnificence and honour, Rom. 5:20. 'The law entered'—that is, it was promulgated first by Moses, and is still preached—'that the offence might abound:'—that is in the conscience by a deeper sense and remorse. And why so, but that 'where sin abounded, grace might much more abound?' We must needs shape our thoughts of the mercy that pardons our sins, suitable to the thoughts we frame to ourselves of the sins we have committed. If we conceive these little, how can we think the other great? And if we tremble at the greatness of our sins, we must needs triumph and exult at the transcendency of the mercy which so far exceeds their bulk and greatness. He that wonders at the height of some high mountain, would much more wonder at the depth of those waters which should quite swallow and cover it from being seen.

(2.) End. The second end of the promise is the believer's comfort. The word, especially this part of it, was on purpose writ, that 'through patience and comfort of the Scriptures they might have hope,' Rom. 15:4. God was willing to give poor sinners all the security and satisfaction that might be, concerning the reality of his intentions, and immutability of that counsel which his mercy had resolved upon from eternity, for the saving of all those who would embrace Christ, and the terms offered through him in the gospel; which, that he might do, he makes publication in the Scripture, where he opens his very heart and exposeth the purposes of his love—that from everlasting he had taken up for the salvation of poor sinners—to their own view in the many precious promises, that run like veins throughout the whole body of the Scriptures, and these with all the seals and ratifications which either his wisdom could find, or man's jealous unbelieving heart desire, and all this on a de-

sign to silence the querulous spirit of poor tempted souls, and make their life more comfortable, who, pursued by the hue and cry of their high climbing sins, take sanctuary for their lives in Christ Jesus. As we have it in totidem verbis—in so many words, ‘That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us,’ Heb. 6:18. And because that of the greatness and multitude of the creature’s sins, is both the heaviest millstone which the devil can find to tie about the poor sinner’s neck, in order to the drowning him in despair, and that knife also which is the oftenest taken up by the tempted sinner’s own hands for the murdering his faith; therefore the more frequent and abundant provision is made by God against this. Or read for this purpose these choice scriptures, Ex. 34:5; Jer. 3, the whole chapter; Isa. 1:18; 45:7-9, 12; Heb. 7:25; I John 1:9; these, and such like places, are the strongholds which faith retreats into when this battery is raised against the soul.

Canst thou for shame be gravelled, saith faith, O my soul, with an argument drawn merely from the greatness of thy sins, which is answered in every page almost in the Bible, and to confute which so considerable part of Scripture was written? Thus faith hisseth Satan away with this his argument, that he counts so formidable, as they would do a wrangling sophister out of the schools, when he boldly and ridiculously denies some known principle, acknowledged by all for a truth that have not lost their wits. But I would not be here mistaken. God forbid, that while I am curing despair I should cause presumption in any. These two distempers of the soul are equally mortal and dangerous, and so contrary, that, like the cold stomach and the hot liver in the same person, while the physician thinks to help nature in the one to a heat for digesting its food, he sometimes unhappily kindles a fire in the other that destroys nature itself. Thus, while we labour to cheer the drooping soul’s spirits, and strengthen him to retain and digest the promise for his comfort, we are in danger of nourishing that feverish heat of presumptuous confidence, which is a fire will soon eat out all care to please, and fear to displease, God; and consequently all ground of true faith in the soul. Faith and fear are like the natural heat and radical moisture in the body, which is never

well but when both are preserved. ‘The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.’ Let me therefore caution thee, Christian. As thou meanest to find any relief from the mercy of God in a day of distress, take heed thou dost not think to befriend thyself with hopes of any favour thou mayest find from it, though thou continuest thy friendship with thy lusts. [It were] a design as infecable as to reconcile light and darkness, and bring day to dwell with night. Thou needest not indeed fear to believe the pardon of thy sins—if thou repentest of them—merely because they are great; but tremble to think of sinning boldly, because the mercy of God is great. Though mercy be willing to be a sanctuary to the trembling sinner, to shelter him from the curse of his sin; yet it disdains to spread her wing over a bold sinner, to cover him while he is naught with his lust. What! sin because there are promises of pardon, and these promises made by mercy, which as far exceeds our sins as God doth the creature! Truly this is the antipodes to the meaning that God’s mercy had in making them, and turns the gospel with its heels upwards. [It is] as if your servant should get to your cellar of strong waters, and with them make himself drunk, which you keep for them when sick or faint, and then only to be used. O take heed of quaffing thus in the bowls of the sanctuary. It is the sad soul, not the sinning, that this wine of consolation belongs to.

3. Way. Faith presents the Christian with a cloud of witnesses to whom the promise hath been fulfilled; and these as great sinners as himself is. Scripture examples are promises verified. They are book-cases, which faith may make use of by way of encouragement, as well as promises. God would never have left the saints’ great blots to stand in the Scriptures, to the view of the world in all succeeding generations, had not it been of such use and advantage to tempted souls, to choke this temptation, which of all other makes the most dangerous breach in their souls—so wide sometimes, that despair itself is ready to enter in at it. Blessed Paul gives this very reason why such acts of pardoning mercy to great sinners are recorded, Eph. 2. He shows first what foul filthy creatures himself and other believers contemporary with him were before they were made partakers of gospel grace. ‘Among whom also we all had

our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh,' Eph. 2:3; and then he magnifies the rich mercy of God, that rescued and took them out of that damned desperate state. 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,... hath quickened us together with Christ,' ver. 4.

And why must the world know all this? O, God had a design and plot of mercy in them to more than themselves—"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus,' ver. 7. Wherever the gospel comes this shall be spoken of, what great sins he had forgiven to them, that unbelief might have her mouth stopped to the end of the world, and this arrow which is so oft on Satan's string made headless and harmless. God commanded Joshua to take twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan and set them up. And observe the reason, 'That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever,' Joshua 4:6, 7. Thus God hath, by his pardoning mercy, taken up some great notorious sinners out of the very depths of sin, who lay at the very bottom, as it were, of hell, swallowed up and engulfed in all manner of abomination; and these he hath set up in his word, that when any poor tempted souls to the end of the world—who are even overwhelmed with fears from the greatness of their sins—shall see and read what God hath done for these, they may be relieved and comforted with these examples, by God intended to be as a memorial of what he hath done for others in time past, so a sign what he shall do, yea, will, for the greatest sinners to the world's end, upon their repentance and faith. No sins, though as great and many as the waters of Jordan themselves, shall be able to stand before the mercy of God's gracious covenant, but shall all be cut off and everlastingly pardoned to them.

O who can read a Manasseh, a Magdalene, a Saul, yea, an Adam—who undid himself and a whole world with him—in the roll of pardoned sinners, and yet turn away from the promise, out of a fear that

there is not mercy enough in it to serve his turn? These are as landmarks, that show what large boundaries mercy hath set to itself, and how far it hath gone, even to take into its pardoning arms the greatest sinners, that make not themselves incapable thereof by final impenitency. It were a healthful walk, poor doubting Christian, for thy soul to go this circuit, and oft to see where the utmost stone is laid and boundary set by God's pardoning mercy—farther than which he will not go—that thou mayest not turn in the stone to the prejudice of the mercy of God by thy own unbelief, nor suffer thyself to be abused by Satan's lies, who will make nothing to remove God's land-mark, if he may by it but increase thy trouble of spirit, though he be cursed for it himself. But if, after all this, thy sins seems to exceed the proportion of any one thou canst find pardoned in Scripture—which were strange—yet faith at this plunge hath one way left beyond all these examples for thy soul's succour, and that is to fix thy eye on Christ, who, though he never had sin of his own, yet laid down his life to procure and purchase pardon for all the elect, and hath obtained it; they are all, and shall, as they come upon the stage, be pardoned. 'Now,' saith faith, 'suppose thy sins were greater than any one saint's; yet are they as great as all the sins of the elect together?' Thou darest not surely say or think so. And cannot Christ procure thy pardon, who art but a single person, that hath done it for so many millions of his elect? Yea, were thy sins as great as all theirs are, the sum would be the same; and God could forgive it if it lay in one heap, as well as now when it is in several. Christ is 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,' John 1:29. See here all the sins of the elect world trussed up in one fardel,⁹ and he carries it lightly away into the land of forgetfulness. Now faith will tell thee, poor soul, that the whole virtue and merit of Christ's blood, by which the world was redeemed, is offered to thee, and shall be communicated to thy soul in particular. Christ doth not retail and parcel out his blood and the purchase of it, some to one and some to another; then thou mightest say something; but he gives his whole self to the faith of every believer. All is yours, you are Christ's. O,

9. Fardel: bundle or burden. From Webster's — SDB

what mayest thou not, poor soul, take up from the promise, upon the credit of so great a Redeemer?

[To the greatness of all the rest, faith opposes
THE GREATNESS OF THIS ONE SIN OF DESPAIR.]

Third. Faith, to quench this fiery dart headed with the greatness of sin, and shot by Satan to drive the poor and penitent soul to despair, teacheth him to oppose the greatness of this one sin of despair to the greatness of all his other sins. ‘What,’ saith faith, ‘would Satan persuade thee, because thou hast been so great and prodigious a sinner, therefore not to believe, or dare to think the promise hath any good news for thee? Retort thou, O my soul, his argument upon himself, and tell him [that] that very thing by which he would dissuade thee from believing, doth much more deter thee from despairing; and that is the greatness of this sin above all thy other.’ Grant to be true what he chargeth thee withal, that thou art such a monster in sin as he sets thee forth—though thou hast no reason to think so upon his bare report, but yield him his saying—dost thou think to mend the matter or better thy condition by despairing? Is this all the kindness he will show thee, to make thee of a great sinner, a desperate sinner like himself? This, indeed, is the only way he can think of to make thee worse than thou art. And, that this is true, faith is able to prove by these four considerations of this bloody horrid sin, which will easily evince more malignity to be in this one sin of despair, than in any other, yea, all other together. 1. Despair opposeth God in the greatest of all his commands. 2. Despair hath a way peculiar to itself of dishonouring God above other sins. 3. Despair strengthens and enrages all other sins in the soul. 4. The greatness of this sin of despair appears in this, that the least sin envenomed by it is unpardonable, and without this the greatest is pardonable.

[FOUR CONSIDERATIONS proving the sin of despair
to exceed all others together.]

Consideration 1. Despair opposeth God in the greatest of all his commands. The greatest command without all compare in the whole Bible, is to believe. When those Jews asked our Lord Jesus, ‘What shall

we do, that we might work the works of God?’ mark his answer, ‘This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent,’ John 6:28, 29. As if he had said, The most compendious way that I am able to give you, is to receive me into your hearts by faith; do this, and you do all in one. This is the work that is *instar omnium*—all in all. All you do is undone, and yourselves also, till this work be done, for which you shall have as much thanks at God’s hands as if you could keep the whole law. Indeed, it is accepted in lieu of it: ‘To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,’ Rom. 4:5; where ‘he that worketh not,’ is not meant a slothful lazy sinner that hath no list to work, nor a rebellious sinner whose heart riseth against the work which the holy law of God would employ him in; but the humbled sinner, who desires and endeavours to work, but is no way able to do the task the law as a covenant sets him, and therefore is said to have a law-sense not to work, because he doth not work to the law’s purpose, so as to answer its demands, which will accept nothing short of perfect obedience. This man’s faith on Christ is accepted for righteousness; that is, God reckons him so, and so he shall pass at the great day by the judge’s sentence, as if he had never trod one step awry from the path of the law. Now, if faith be the work of God above all other, then unbelief is the work of the devil, and that to which he had rather thou shouldst do than drink or drab. And despair is unbelief at the worst. Unbelief among sins is as the plague among disease, the most dangerous; but when it riseth to despair, then it is as the plague with the tokens that bring the certain message of death with them. Unbelief is despair in the bud, despair is unbelief at its full growth.

Consideration 2. Despair hath a way peculiar to itself of dishonouring God above other sins. Every sin wounds the law, and the name of God through the law’s sides. But this wound is healed when the penitent sinner by faith comes to Christ and closeth with him. God makes account, reparations now are fully made through Christ—whom the believer receives—for the wrong done to his law, and his name vindicated from the dishonour cast upon it by the creature’s former iniquities; yea, that it appears more glorious because it is illustrious, by the shining forth of one title of honour, not the least prized by God

himself—his forgiving mercy—which could not have been so well known to the creature, if not drawn forth to act upon this occasion. But what would you say of such a prodigious sinner that, when he hath wounded the law, is not willing to have it healed? when he hath dishonoured God, and that in a high provoking manner, is not willing that the dirt he hath cast on God's face should be wiped off? Methinks I see every one of your choler to rise at the reading of this, against such a wretch, and hear you asking, as once Ahasuerus did Esther, 'Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?' *Est. 7:5*. Would you know? Truly, the adversary and enemy is this wicked despair. The despairing soul is the person that will not let Christ make satisfaction for the wrong that by his sins he hath done to God. Suppose a man should wound another dangerously in his passion, and when he hath done, will not let any chirurgeon come near to cure the wound he hath made. Every one would say his last act of cruelty was worse than his first.

O my soul, saith faith, thou didst ill, yea, very ill, in breaking the holy laws of God, and dishonouring the name of the great God of heaven and earth thereby; let thy heart ache for this. But thou dost far worse by despairing of mercy. In this act thou rejectest Christ, and keepest him off from satisfying the justice of the law that is injured by thee, and from redeeming the honour of his name from the reproach thy sins have scandalized it with. What language speaks thy despair but this? Let God come by his right and honour as he can, thou wilt never be an instrument active in the helping of him to it, by believing on Christ, in whom he may fully have them with advantage. O what shame would despair put the mercy of God to in the sight of Satan his worst enemy! He claps his hands at this, to see all the glorious attributes of God served alike and divested of their honour. This is meat and drink to him. That cursed spirit desires no better music than to hear the soul ring the promises, like bells, backward; make no other use of them than to confirm it in its own desperate thoughts of its damnation, and to tell it hell-fire is kindled in its conscience, which no mercy in God will or can quench to eternity. As the bloody Jews and Roman soldiers exercised their cruelty on every part almost of Christ's body, crowning his head with thorns, goring his side

with a spear, and fastening his hands and feet with nails; so the despairing sinner deals with the whole name of God. He doth, as it were, put a mock crown on the head of his wisdom, setting it all to naught, and charging it foolishly, as if the method of salvation was not laid with prudence by the all-wise God. He nails the hands of his almighty power, while he thinks his sins are of that nature as put him out of the reach and beyond the power of God to save him. He pierceth the tender bowels of God through his mercy, of which he cannot see enough in a God that not only hath, but is, mercy and love itself, to persuade him to hope for any favour or forgiveness at his hands. In a word, the despairing soul transfixeth his very heart and will, while he unworthily frames notions of God, as if he were unwilling to the work of mercy, and not so inclined to exercise acts of pardon and forgiveness on poor sinners as the word declares him. No, despair basely misreports him to the soul, as if he were a lame God, and had no feet—affections, I mean—to carry him to such a work as forgiving sin is. Now, what does the sum of all this amount to? If you can, without horror and amazement, stand to cast it up, and consider the weight of those circumstances which aggravate the flagitiousness of this unparalleled fact, surely it riseth to no less than the highest attempt that the creature can make for the murdering of God himself; for the infinitude of God's wisdom, power, mercy, and all his attributes, are more intrinsical to the essence and being of God, than the heart-blood is to the life of a mortal man. Shall he that lets out the heart-blood of a man, yea, but attempts to do it, be a murderer—especially if he be a prince or a king the design is against—and deservedly suffer as such a one? and shall not he much more be counted and punished as the worst of all murderers that attempts to take away the life of God—though his arm and dagger be too short for the purpose—by taking from him in his thoughts the infinitude of those attributes which are, as I may say, the very life of God? Surely God will neither part with the glory, nor suffer the dishonour, of his name at the hands of his sorry creature; but will engage all his attributes for the avenging himself on the wretch that attempts it. O tremble therefore at despair. Nothing makes thy face gather blackness, and thy soul hasten faster to the complexion of the damned souls, than this. Now

thou sinnest after the similitude of those that are in hell.

Consideration 3. Despair strengthens and enrageth all other sins in the soul. None fight so fiercely as those who look for no quarter. They think themselves dead men, and therefore they will sell their lives as dear as they can. Samson despaired of ever getting out of the Philistines' hands—his eyes being now lost, and he unfit to make an escape. What doth he meditate, now his case is desperate, but his enemies' ruin, though it costs him his own? He cares not though he pulls the house on his own head, so it may but fall on the Philistines' also. Absalom, when by the cursed counsel of Ahithophel he had, as he thought, made himself so hateful to David as to put him past all hope of being treated with, then breaks out with a high rage and seeks the ruin of his royal father with fire and sword. So cruel a thing is despair, it teaches to show no respect where it looks for none. But most clearly it appears in the devil himself, who, knowing himself to be excepted from the pardon, sins with a rage as high as heaven. And the same sin hath the same effects in men that it hath in the devil, according to the degrees of it that are found in them. 'They said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices,' Jer. 18:11, 12. Did you never see a sturdy beggar—after a while knocking at a door, and concluding by the present silence or denial that he shall have nothing given him—fall into a cursing and railing of them that dwell there? Even such foul language doth despair learn the sinner to belch out against the God of heaven. If despair enters it is impossible to keep blasphemy out. Pray, therefore, and do thy utmost to repel this dart, lest it soon set thy soul on a flame with this hell-fire of blasphemy.

Hear, O you souls smitten for sin, that spend your life in sighs, sobs, and tears for your horrid

crimes past, would you again be seen fighting against God as fierce as ever? As you would not, take heed of despair. If thou once thinkest that God's heart is hardened against thee, thy heart will not be long hardening against him. And this, by the way, may administer comfort to the thoughts of some gracious but troubled souls, who can find no faith that they have, yea, who are oft reckoning themselves among despairers. Let me ask thee who art in this sad condition, this one thing, Canst thou find any love breathing in thy heart towards God, though thou canst find no breath of love coming at present from him to thee? And art thou tender and fearful of sinning against him, even while thou seemest to thy own thoughts to hope for no mercy from him? If so, be of good comfort; thy faith may be weak, but thou art far from being under the power of despair. Desperate souls do not use to reserve any love for God, or care for the pleasing of him. There is some faith surely in thy soul which is the cause of these motions, though, like the spring in a watch, it be itself unseen, when the other graces moved by it are visible.

Consideration 4. The greatness of this sin of despair appears in this, that the least sin envenomed by it is unpardonable, and without this the greatest is pardonable. That must needs of all sins be most abominable which makes the creature incapable of mercy. Judas was not damned merely for his treason and murder; for others that had their hands deep in the same horrid fact, obtained a pardon by faith in that blood which through cruelty they shed; but they were these heightened into the greatest malignity possible, from the putrid stuff of despair and final impenitency with which his wretched heart was filled, that he died so miserably of, and now is infinitely more miserably damned for. Such being despair, then, oh, let us shrink from the woful gulf!