

SERMON XIV

CHRIST'S FREE WELCOME TO ALL COMERS

Tobias Crisp

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." {Jn.6:37}

These are the words of our Saviour; the occasion was this, he having not only a natural sympathy and compassion, but also being a spiritual physician, disperses abroad common mercies in an extraordinary manner. In the former chapter, he is plentiful in healing the sick, and curing many diseases; natural men, being sensible of such kindnesses, flocked mightily after him. And though Christ knew well enough what they were, as you shall see by and by, yet he shuts not the bowels of compassion from them in extremity; there were many ready to faint; now, rather than they should want supply, he would work another miracle, and, with a few loaves and fishes, satisfy thousands of them, and so he doth. This people finding good cheer, they are like dogs, can scarce leave the house; bear with the expression, for they were no better, for all their flocking to Christ. I say, they were so eager to follow him, no ground should hold them. Christ takes ship, and goes over sea to Capernaum; no country is too cold for them; nay, the sea itself shall not part Christ and them; after him they will go.

Well, they come to him; and, because he had been so kind to feed them, they think they may be familiar with him; and, therefore, after their carnal fashion, begin to put questions unto him, I say, in a fleshly way; in a low fashion, they begin to argue with him, "how came he there?" Such poor silly stuff they object to him. Well, though Christ had natural compassion, yet he will not soothe them in their folly and simplicity, but deals roundly with them, and tells them plainly that they were mistaken in him, if they thought his excellency did stand in working miracles for food, for bread; he came on a higher errand, and a business of greater consequence; and, therefore, tells them plainly, it was another business he came about; their thoughts must rise higher than the loaves; "labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto eternal life." He comes about eternal life, he brings that which might produce that unto them, and therefore counsels them to look after it. Well, because they are in talk, they hold it on, though to little purpose, and put another question to Christ, "what shall we do that we may work the works of God?" Naturally, men are upon doing to get; when we talk upon matters of religion, it is doing gets everything; therefore, they will be doing, that they may have something; now, though Christ doth not answer the question they made, being a silly one, yet he gives them another answer that was to the purpose; "this is the work of God, to believe in him whom he hath sent." Never look to get it by doing; look to get it from him, and not from yourselves, and your own doings. {Jn.6:26-29}

When Christ had made that answer, they began to be a little angry with him, and to put a caviling question, or a question by way of exception against him; "what sign shewest thou {say they,} then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work?" Moses gave us this bread from heaven; {speaking of manna.} What doth Christ tell them of life that he brings? What is he better than Moses? Will he give better bread than manna was? Well, {for all their heat, passion, and peevishness,} he will answer them again, "your fathers did eat manna and are dead;" here he takes them off from their great Rabbi, whom they mentioned as if he was their Christ; and also from their objection; saying, that the manna they did eat was but satisfactory for a time, there was not life in it; they that did eat it are dead; and, therefore, he comes to make application, and to show wherein he excelled Moses, and wherein that bread he brings exceeds manna, "I am the bread of life; he that

cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst;" {vs.35;} they ate manna, and yet were empty for all that; they drank of the rock Moses smote, and yet they were athirst again; "but he that comes to me, shall not hunger;" for I have so much as shall satisfy, there shall be no lack at all.

After Christ had made this discourse, he begins to deal plainly with them indeed, and tells them that "though they had seen, yet they believed not." It may be some discouragement to men, that labour in the vineyard of the Lord, to see small fruit of their labours; but here, you see, Christ himself took a great deal of pains with these men, and all to little purpose, or rather to no purpose at all; therefore, in verse 37, Christ comforts himself against that common discomfort which was though these men believe not, {"ye also have seen me, and believe not; vs.36;} yet, "all that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" I shall have all that I expect; I never look for more than the Father gives me; and of those that he gives, I shall lose none; and then, afterwards, in the words of the text, he comforts those that do come; these, that would not come, he leaves, and falls to consolation for his people that do come; "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

The doctrine the words afford, will be natural, it shall not vary a jot from the very words of the Holy Ghost; "he that comes to Christ, he will in no wise cast him out;" mark it well beloved, there is abundance of life in it, to those whose eyes the Lord will be pleased to open, to behold the fulness in it; I say, he that comes to Christ, it is no matter who nor what he be, there is nothing in the world can be considered as an hindrance to his coming; if he do but come, he may be certain of this, "he shall in no wise be cast out;" there is no man under heaven, be he as vile as can possibly be imagined, if he do but come to Christ, even while he is so, shall be rejected of him, or have a repulse. Beloved, I desire the doctrine itself may be printed and stamped in your spirits.

Give me leave to speak a few words in general, before I come to particulars. I know, I may speak that which will be offence to some, but I must speak the truth of the Lord, whatever men say. I say, whatever thou art in this congregation, suppose a drunkard, a whore-master, a swearer, a blasphemer and persecutor, a madman in iniquity, couldst thou but come to Jesus Christ; I say, come, only come, it is no matter though there be no alteration in the world in thee, in that instant when thou dost come; I say, at that instant, though thou be thus vile as can be imagined, come to Christ; he is untrue if he put thee out; "in no wise, {saith he} will I cast thee out."¹

There are two sorts of people in the world that are given by the Father to Christ, who yet, for the present, do not actually come to him.

¹ {Note: That is, no alteration visible to him, or others; none in his heart that he can observe, or take any encouragement from; nor any in his life and conversation observable to men; otherwise, there must be an alteration in him, or it is impossible for him to come to Christ, that is, believe in him; he must have grace given him to draw him, or he will never come, he cannot. [Jn.6:44-65] The desires of the soul must be towards Christ; there must be a sight of him, and of both the want and worth of him; but the sense is, that a man that has been ever so vile, even to the very instant that he is called, and directed to Christ, and while he can see nothing else but sin in him, he should not stay for any preparations and qualifications in him fitting him for Christ; that is till his heart is cleansed, and his life reformed, but as vile a sinner as he is, and in the view of all the notorious sins he has lived in, should go to Christ, and venture his soul on him. The design of these expressions, however offensive they may be to some, is not to encourage men in sin; nor do they suppose, that men, on coming to Christ, may, or will continue such as they have been before; for an alteration in heart and life, follows at once upon coming to Christ; by faith the heart is purified, that works by love, and is attended by the fruits of righteousness; but to show that nothing should hinder or discourage sensible sinners, though ever so vile, from immediate coming to Christ, and that nothing will hinder him from receiving such, and that such should not wait for any qualifications to fit them for him; and if they had them, should not bring them to him for that purpose; but should come as sinners, and commit their souls unto him, believing in him unto salvation. Thus Saul, in the height of his rebellion, when his heart and mouth were filled with blasphemy against Christ, and bitterness against his people, and in the full pursuit of these lusts, the Lord called him by his grace, and revealed his Son in him; Christ appeared to him; light shone around him; grace reached his heart, and brought him at once to the feet of Jesus; hence he says, "I, who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious person, I obtained mercy;" on which Beza has these words, "these are the preparatory works the Apostle sets himself off with;" for nothing intervenes between his having been all this, and his obtaining mercy, as the cause of it, or as fitting him for it; and had he been guilty of adultery, drunkenness, and swearing, [crimes not greater than what he had been guilty of] he could, and no doubt would have said, I Paul, the adulterer, the drunkard, the swearer, I obtained mercy. Gill.}

First, there are a sort of men in the world, elected indeed, but, for the present, are wild asses upon the mountains, snuffing up the wind, and as desperate in iniquity as the veriest reprobate under heaven; and yet there shall not be rejection of these persons when they come; I say, whenever they come, though as sinful as their skins can hold; yet when they come to Christ, they shall not be cast out; for the present indeed, they despise their birthright, they scorn the grace of God, and cast it at their heels.

But there are a second sort of people given by God to Christ that have not received him, and are not actually come to him; and yet for the present are wrought upon to be a willing people in some sort; that is, the Lord hath dealt thus far with them, fain they would close with Christ, fain they would conclude an interest and portion in him; Oh! it would be welcome to them; it would be life to them, to be certainly satisfied that his blood is their ransom, and that their sins are blotted out thereby; I say, fain they would, but they dare not yet close with Christ for their lives; they dare not set up their rest here; they dare not sit down with any such conclusion; but still there is something or other, that remains, that must be removed out of the way, before they can make this certain conclusion, Christ is theirs. Now, my principal errand is, at this time, is to this latter sort of people; a people, I say, whose hearts tell them, if it could appear clearly, that, without danger to them, they may say, Christ is their salvation, and sit down with this; if they could be satisfied with it, rather than their lives they would have Jesus Christ, but they dare not; something or other is wanting, they dare not lay hold upon him, and it is presumption for them to sit down satisfied, Christ is theirs; this is the generation I am at present to deal with, and to declare, by the power of Jesus Christ, his clear mind to them, and by that power to pluck them out of the mire wherein for the present they stick fast.

And that I may the better come upon the spirits of such heavy laden persons, let us consider these three things; first, what this coming to Christ is, that is here spoken of. Secondly, what his purpose is in proposing this coming to him. Thirdly, what he means by this expression of his, "I will in no wise cast him out." I shall speak briefly of the two former, because the life of Christ's purpose lies in the last of these particulars.

First, what doth Christ mean by coming unto him? In verse 35, he will give you his mind himself, "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Mark it well, he makes coming and believing, in sense, all one; for if you observe it, such as Christ deals withal they are unsatisfied and empty ones; now he satisfies the empty; and whose emptiness will he fill? Even of those that believe in him, that come to him; believing and coming therefore are all one, so that to come to Christ, is to believe in him. But we are as far to seek as we were, you will say, what is that believing on Christ? In John 1:12, you shall see what it is to believe on him. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Here he makes receiving and believing all one, as before he made coming and believing. The sum, in brief, is this, that coming to Christ is no more but the receiving of him for shelter and relief. A man is said to come to a strong-hold, when he enters into it for his security and safety; he doth not stand hacking and hammering, shall I, or shall I not? But danger forces him, and in he gets, the door being open, and comes to his stronghold; so a person comes to Christ; Christ opening, he slips in, and ventures himself with him, and casts himself into his arms, and he will sink or swim with him.

Beloved, whoever you are that can but come to him, be you what you will, or may be, I say, if you come to him, to venture yourselves upon the rock Christ, to sink or swim, as he will support and uphold you, counting him a refuge, to have him for your succor; he "in no wise will he cast you out."

But, secondly, to what purpose doth Christ propose coming here will some say? Beloved, I propound this the rather, because I conceive men mistake the mind of Christ concerning this coming. You must not imagine, that our motion of coming is the primary mover that gives motion to Christ to open and entertain; as if our coming did stir him up to set open, and give entrance. Christ hath not any such thought in him that we must come, and therefore will own us for his own; for it is certainly true, the very motion of our coming to Christ, is from himself, and from his coming to us, before we do so much as move. It is a common principle known to all divines, and most people; we are first

acted, and then we act. First, Christ gives to us to come, and then, by his gift, we come to him; we must not imagine that by coming to Christ, he is moved and invited towards us, and is stirred up to open to us, and give entertainment to us; but his first coming to us, and living in us, stirs us up to motion. "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." {Eph.2:1} Beloved, is there death till Christ quickens? Where then can there be this motion of ours, before he himself be come with his life? Where there is no life, you know there is no motion; and till the fountain of life communicates it, there can be none; therefore it is Christ that gives this coming unto men, and he having given it, they come to him.

But what is the purpose of Christ then, in speaking of coming here, as if this were a preparation or a previous condition, that there is no portion in Christ, till there be first coming?

I answer, mark the scope well, for you shall find Christ doth not intend a necessary condition, but the removal of all objections; he doth not intend to put us on doing to get him, but to take away all obstacles that may hinder us from coming to him; and the emphasis of the text doth not lie upon coming, but upon this, "in no wise will I cast them off;" as if he had said, you are poor wretches; you think I am so hard-hearted, I will cast you off, you are so sinful; but let not this trouble you; whatever sinfulness you have, that, in common apprehension, may hinder me from receiving you coming to me, for all this I will not cast you out when you come. As when a man says to a poor man, come to my house, I will give you something; he proposeth no conditions but grace to him; you shall have something, I will give you this and that.

But, I will come to the third, the main thing I intend at this time, namely, what Christ intends when he saith, "I will in no wise cast you out." Oh; the depth and unsearchable grace that is comprehended in these few words! If it might shine with its own brightness to your spirits, how would you go away leaping and rejoicing, with joy unspeakable and glorious! Why, the Lord is able to communicate to you, above all we are able to ask or think. "I will in no wise cast you out;" do but come, and nothing, I say, nothing shall stand between you and me, to put a bar to hinder an entrance to me.

There are two estates whereto this grace mentioned may belong; either that estate wherein is the breaking forth of the first light to the soul; or that estate wherein, after light is broken forth, darkness seems to come again in the place of it; and this passage of Christ hath reference to both these estates.

First, the first estate wherein light begins first to break out, the first dawning of the light of Christ. To give you an instance, and so bring the business close; suppose a person, as the Apostle does, "you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" {Eph.2:1,2;} I say, suppose a person to be in the worst condition you can imagine; single out the vilest man in the world, the notablest drunkard that ever breathed, the greatest whoremaster, and the lewdest person that can be imagined; such a person as this, and continuing to this very instant, now before the Lord, as he was before, without any change and alteration in the world until this time; suppose such a person; by this text it appears so manifest, that if the Lord do but grant, and hath but put a willingness and readiness of spirit into this man, that Christ he would have, if it might appear he might have him; if his heart do but say, I would have him, all that sinfulness, though to this instant continued in, is no bar in the world, but this man may claim his portion in Christ, and have as certain security that his portion is there, as any other man may have.² Mark well, I say, this passage, "I will in no wise cast him out;" our Saviour plainly imports, that there neither is, nor can be devised, no not by God himself, any one consideration whatsoever, which might occasion him to put off; or say nay, to any one that comes; no consideration in the world, I say, can so aggravate a man's condition, could he make it as bad as the devils themselves; yet, if there be but a coming to Christ, there can be no consideration in the highest pitch

² {Note: Here you see clearly, the Doctor supposes willingness and readiness of spirit to come to Christ, put into such a sinner; which is owing to power and grace thus making willing, and such a soul will never be rejected let him be ever so vile. Gill.}

of sinfulness for him to reject, or put by a person coming to him; for, you must know, Christ is well acquainted with all the objections the heart of man {nay the devil himself} can make against the freeness of his grace, and life by him; to save labour, therefore, in this one passage, "I will in no wise cast out," Christ at once answers all the objections that could be made. And I dare be bold to maintain, in his name and stead; let a man but say, and lay down this for granted, come he would, Christ he would have rather than his life; let this be granted for a truth, I will be bold with Christ out of this passage to answer ten thousand objections, even fully to the silencing of every one that can be made, "I will in no wise cast him out;" that is, I will upon no consideration that can be imagined and conceived. I know the objections are many, and they seem to be very strong in respect of such a person to whom the Lord hath given a willingness and desire of spirit, to close with Christ, and yet, dare not do the thing; I say, they are many, and very strong; but, let them be what they will, you shall see by-and-by they come to no value in the world, there is no strength in them. Let me tell you, the Lord hath sent me, at this time, "to proclaim liberty to such captives," that are in this sad, bitter, and {to their thinking} desperate condition; liberty God hath given thee, if thou wilt come freely; nothing in the world shall hinder thee.

But let us consider the objections that may be made, and therein see what ground poor sinners may have to forsake their own mercy, and so become their own tormentors. I dare not close with Christ, {saith many a poor soul} if I sit down and close with him, being satisfied with this argument, Christ offers himself to sinners, this is presumption; why so? I am the filthiest creature that ever breathed; I should stink above ground with my sins, if you knew what a creature I am, and what an ungodly sinner I am; I am a blasphemer; I do nothing but blaspheme the God of heaven; and I blaspheme his word to persecution; my spirit is mad against the Gospel itself.

I answer, in a word, reckon up all that you can imagine, suppose the worst you can conceive, the truth of the worst, that you have not belied yourselves a jot, in proposing the abominable filthiness and loathsome baseness of your filthy condition; suppose this be imagined; what of this? Surely, as long as I am in this case, Christ cannot belong to me, there is no coming to him for me. If this be truth that you say, that such and such filthiness stands between Christ and you, that though you come, there could be no entertainment with him for you; supposing this to be true, this that Christ speaks is most certainly false; for, saith he, "I will in no wise cast you off;" that is, upon no consideration will I cast you off. You say, upon this consideration, I am so abominably vile, there will be casting off; if this you say be true, that which Christ saith, must be false; there is a point-blank contradiction between these two; and, therefore, either Christ must call in these words again, thus generally delivered, and he must put in this exception that you put in, or else his word and yours cannot agree.

You say, upon such considerations, there is no admittance; and upon such and such there is admittance; Christ saith, "I will in no wise cast you out;" notwithstanding this consideration, I will receive you, be you what you will, do but come, and for all that, you shall be welcome.

But, some will say, men must be fitted for Christ, before he will ever own them. I answer again, is there this exception put into the grant of Christ, except you be fitted for me, I will cast you out? Then you may say indeed, except you be fitted for him he will cast you out; but then, I say, how can this be true, "I will in no wise cast him out?" The words, must run thus, "him that comes to me, {if he be fitted and prepared} I will in no wise cast out;" but if he be not fitted and prepared, I will cast him out; but do they run so? Christ looks not for fitness, but people may be capable of communion with him without fitness; he takes them into communion with himself, and afterwards fits them for it, as he would have them; but, beforehand, there is no fitness; suppose what fitness you will, in expecting the grant, I say, in expecting the grant of Christ, fitness or not fitness is all one; "Come to me, I will in no wise cast you out."

Peradventure, though the text seems to be so clear, yet you will say, surely the grace of God is not so large as you seem to express it? There must be something expected and considered in the person coming, or there will be no receiving and entertaining by Christ. I answer, it were an easy thing, {if time would give leave} to show that through the whole scripture, the Lord Christ hath such a

purpose to set forth the glory of the grace of his Father, as that he will have men know, that all the fitness of persons, to communicate or participate of Christ, is their desperate sinfulness; I say, nothing but sinfulness is that which is the fitness that Christ looks for in men.³ I beseech you, peruse that passage, never to be forgotten, {Ezekiel, chapter 16,} where the Holy Ghost, in the beginning of the chapter, first states the case concerning the condition of persons; then makes the conclusion, the state being granted. Suppose your condition of sinfulness rise up to the height of the illustration there mentioned, of a child polluted in its blood; which kind of expression the Holy Ghost useth, as that which doth, of all other things in the world, most set out the loathsome nastiness, and intolerable filthiness of sin in men; "thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born." {Ez.16:3-5} Here is the nature of the sinfulness of persons polluted in blood. There was such a filthy loathsomeness in this pollution, that it was beyond the pity of any creature; it was so abominably filthy, that there was no place for pity; nay, more, such pollution of blood there was, that did occasion casting out, as if the abiding of that person in the room any longer, would poison all the rest; and, therefore, because there could not be an enduring of that loathsomeness any longer, there must be flinging out upon the dunghill.

Suppose your sins rise to this very height, and there is such a stench of filthiness in them, that all the world should even vomit to think of that sinfulness that you have acted and committed; what of all this? Surely, you will say that there is no portion in Christ for me, as long as my case is such a case as this. Observe the strange expression of the Holy Ghost, "when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live;" there is a great deal of difference between saying, Live, and casting out of such persons; when no eye pitied thee, that time which was the time of thy blood, "that time was the time of love." This is strange indeed, that all the creatures in the world should turn against such a person, as should be so abominable, that men should abhor him; and yet the time of his pollution, should be Christ's time of love. Well, but you will say, Surely, before Christ will communicate himself, and give up himself to such men, for all this, the case must be altered with them; you shall see it is no such matter, but directly the contrary. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine." {vs.8} What strange expressions are here! Methinks your hearts cannot but be wrapped up into heaven, in admiration of them; these the Lord aggravates to the highest terms that can be imagined; setting forth the most horrible loathsomeness of the sinfulness of men; and yet that time of sinfulness, was the time of God's love; and not only so, but a time wherein God swore to and entered into covenant with this person, and became his.

But, you will say, there was some cleansing before. You shall see the Holy Ghost in the next words makes it appear it is not so; mark the words well, "then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil;" then, when I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. Here was not first a washing, and then swearing, and entering into a covenant; but there was first swearing and entering into covenant, and then washing with water afterwards; here is a coming and closing with Jesus Christ, even while the state of a person is the filthiest in the world; and I tell you, beloved, either you must close with Christ for your comfort, unworthy as you are, or you must never receive him while you live. "Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." You that will bring righteousness with you to be received of Christ; I tell you, he came not to save such persons. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." {Rom.5:6}

³ {Note: Not what makes a soul lovely to Christ, but what makes Christ necessary and suitable to that. Gill.}

But, you will say, for all this high aggravation of loathsomeness and sinfulness, my case is worse than all this that you speak of; therefore there is something in my condition, that if I come to Christ he must cast me off; here is nothing but positive filthiness; it is true, indeed, this condition is very bad, but my case rises higher; besides a positive loathsomeness in myself, I am a rebel, a sturdy enemy, I fight against God, I quarrel with him, and take up arms against him. Imagine your condition a condition of as great enmity and madness against God, as your hearts can possibly devise; what then? Sure you will say, if I be such an enemy, I must lay down arms before Christ will have to do with me, or admit me to come to him. Will a king let a cut-throat traitor, while he hath thoughts in his heart to murder him, will he let him come with a naked knife into his presence, and graciously embrace him in his arms?

For answer, still see the close of the text, observe that if this be true, that in respect of this rebelliousness in thy spirit against God, thou sayest, if I come, Christ will cast me off; these words "in no wise" cannot be true; for here is a consideration, as before, that makes, an exception, and so frustrates thy entrance to Christ, though there be coming.

Beloved, do you think it was out of the thoughts of Christ, to wit, your enmity, and rebellion? And if he thought of it, do you think he would not have put it in? Surely he was wise enough, and knew what he said, and certainly had rebelliousness itself in his thoughts when he spoke the words, in no wise; and certainly this shall not prejudice you, but if you come to Christ, he is as much yours as if you never took up arms against him. But to clear up this truth to you more fully, look into Psalm 68:18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." Mark it well; you say there is no dwelling for Christ with rebels, that is your position; I am a rebel, so there can be no entertainment with him for me; but, saith the text, {note it I pray,} that he received gifts for the rebellious, that "the Lord God might dwell among them." If that be not clear enough look into Romans 5:6-10, "if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life;" mark the expression, it is a strange one; you must directly deny the truth of what the Apostle says if you will stand to this principle, that as long as you are enemies there is no admittance unto Christ for you; for, saith the text, "while we were enemies, we were reconciled;" not that Christ provided reconciliation for enemies, that when they be amended, they shall be saved, but during enmity itself they receive reconciliation. I do not speak this to the intent that any should conceive that God leaves persons rebellious, vile, and loathsome, as he finds them, when he closeth with them; but, I say, at that time, when the Lord closeth with persons, he closeth with them in such a state of rebellion; and if thou comest to Christ in this condition, it manifestly shall appear to thee, that he will open his bosom for thy head to rest upon, {Jn.13:25,} as well as for the most righteous person in the world, and his breast for thy mouth to suck. {Isa.66:11, 12.}⁴

He shuts the door to none that comes; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." {Is.55:1} Let everyone; there is not one exempted; yet, not I, saith one, not I, saith another; but the Holy Ghost saith, "let everyone come." No man under heaven that hath a heart to come, and suck of the breasts of Christ, but the way is free for him; the fountain is set open for all sin and uncleanness; at the pool of Bethesda every impotent person might step in; at the bath the poorest man in the world may go, if he will, and step in; neither is the loathsomest person in the world excluded; now Christ is that hath opened for all comers; there is no comer shall ever be cast off; I dare be bold to say, there never did miscarry any person in the world that did indeed come to him; if there did any miscarry, there is no credit to be given to the words of Christ himself.

But I see I must hasten. I come now to consider the power of this expression to persons that had the light risen to them, but think now darkness is come over them again; I mean those that have

⁴ {Note: And it should be observed, that all before spoken, is said to such who are deemed sensible of their rebellion and vileness; and also under some temptations that Christ will not receive them, being so very sinful. Gill.}

received Christ, and have believed, but something or other hath happened, that even they suspect, that if they should come to him, he would cast them off. But if the first proposition be granted, that is discussed, then much more this; "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" {Rom.8:32} "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." {Rom.5:10} If while we are without strength, Christ in due time died for the ungodly; if while we were sinners he died for us, how much more shall we be saved from wrath being reconciled! All this is to show that if Christ did not shut out persons in the worst condition, when they had no acquaintance at all with him, much less will he cast out those that he had familiarity with in former times; there is no condition in the world a believer is subject to, that may occasion the least suspicion that Christ will cast him out, if he come.

But you will say, suppose a believer falls into some scandalous sins, and notorious sins, it may be to commit murder and adultery together, as David did; surely now there is some cause of suspicion, that if he come presently to Christ after he commits these things, he will send him packing. I answer, if this be true, there must be a putting in of this exception into the text, if thou art a believer and commit such and such a sin, though thou comes to me, I will cast thee out; and if it be so, Christ must cut off that large expression of his, "I will in no wise cast thee out." You will say, this is strange doctrine; suppose a believer commit adultery and murder, may he presently look upon Christ, and in him see a discharge of his sins, and reconciliation by him, and part in him, at that very time he commits them? Surely there must be large humiliation and confession of these sins; and there must be a long continuance in this too; he must not apply comfort presently; there must be more brokenness of heart yet, and more yet, and more yet; and this is the objection of the world.

I answer, I confess the crime is great in its kind, and, for the present, it may silence the voice of truth itself; but whatever becomes of it, that Christ may have the glory of his grace, and the glory of that fulness of redemption wrought all at once; let me tell you, believers cannot commit those sins that may give just occasion of suspicion to them, that if they come to Christ he would cast them out; let me not be mistaken in that I say; I know the enemies of the Gospel will make an evil construction of it; yet a believer, I say, cannot commit those sins that can give occasion to him to suspect, that if he come presently to Christ, he would cast him off.

But must not he confess first, and be afflicted in his soul, before he can think that he shall be received if he come?

For answer to it; I deny not, but acknowledge that when a believer sins, he must confess these sins; and the greatest end and ground of this confession is that which Joshua speaks concerning Achan, Joshua 7:19, "and Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me." That is, my son, confess thy faults, and give glory to God. A believer in confession of sin gives glory to the great God of heaven and earth; and that must be the glorious end of the confession of his sin, that God may be owned, as the sole and only Saviour; except we acknowledge sin, we cannot acknowledge salvation; we cannot acknowledge any virtue in the works and sufferings of Christ; he might have saved his labour, and never come into the world; all that he did could not be acknowledged to be of worth to us, if there had not been sin from which he should save us; he that indeed confesses his sin, confesses he had perished if Christ had not died for him; nay, he confesseth, that nothing in the world, but Christ, could save him.

Secondly, I grant, a believer should be sensible of sin, that is, of the nature of it; but this is that I mainly desire to imprint upon your spirits, that he may certainly conclude, even before confession of sin, the reconciliation that is made between God and him, the interest he hath in Christ, and the love of Christ embracing him; in a word, before a believer confesses his sin, he may be as certain of the pardon of it, as after confession.⁵ I say, there is as much ground to be confident of the

⁵ {Note: Not that confession of sin is a needless thing; the Doctor has before observed, that when a believer sins, he must confess his sins, and points out the ends for which confession is to be made; but then he is not to consider this as the ground or cause of the forgiveness of sin; but being under a sense of sin committed, is at once to look

pardon of sin to a believer, as soon as ever he hath committed it, though he hath not made a solemn act of confession, as to believe it after he hath performed all the humiliation in the world. What is the ground of the pardon of sin? "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own name's sake." Here is pardon, and the fountain of it is in God himself. What is it that discharges a believer? The rise of it is God's own sake; and if this be the ground of pardon, then this being held out, a believer may be assured of pardon as soon as he commits any sin, and may close with it. Pardon of sin depends upon the unchangeableness of God, and not on the stability of the creature; all the pardon in the world that any person shall enjoy, is revealed in this word of grace; and it is the most absurd thing in the world to think that the soul may fetch out a pardon anywhere, but in the word of grace. Is pardon held out in it, and held out to sinners, as they are sinners? And doth God hold out his love to persons before good or evil be done by them, that the purpose of God may stand according to election, not of works, but of grace? And doth a believer find it thus in the word of grace, and may not he rest upon it when he finds it? I beseech you consider; either Christ did not reckon with the Father for all the sins of his people one with another, when he did offer up himself, or he did; if he left out such and such a scandalous sin when he reckoned with him, then Christ did not save to the utmost all them that come to God by him; then there must come another Saviour, to reckon for that which he left out.

Well, you will say, Christ did reckon for all sin with his Father; if he did reckon with him for all, then did he pay him the full price for everyone when he died upon the cross. Then the Father being paid, satisfaction was acknowledged from his hand; he hath beheld the travail of his soul, and he is satisfied; "and the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." {I Jn.1:7} Well, doth God acknowledge full satisfaction for all sin under hand and seal? If it be so, what ground is there of suspicion that Christ will not receive you, but cast you off for such and such transgressions, rather than for such and such? If the reckoning were for all, wherefore do you make such a distinction, where God makes none? If it be made for all, one with another, and the price be paid for all, wherein comes the ground of suspicion? Hath God taken pay for all, and doth that sin, being committed, appear before him still? And must he have more than Christ hath paid? Do not entertain such base thoughts of him. There is not a sin committed this day, but it was as clear before God from all eternity, with all the aggravation, as it is now; and, when God reckoned with Christ for the sins of believers, he took into his consideration the utmost extent of every sin, what it would rise unto, and took a price answerable to the nature and quality of them, of his Son; be they small or great, be they what they will, the price was raised by the Father upon the back and score of Christ, answerable to the transgression.

Now, hath Christ paid all to the utmost farthing? How comes God then to put in this as an exception, as if now there were something done that requires something more than what Christ hath done, before God and you can be friends?

You will say peradventure, in all this will we directly strike at all manner of meeting with God in humiliation and prayer, and fasting and confession of sins.

I answer, with the Apostle, "do we herein make void the law? God forbid! Yea, rather, we establish it." May not a person come and acknowledge his fault to his prince, after he hath received his pardon under his hand, when he is brought from the place of execution? Nay, may not he acknowledge it with melting and extreme bitterness of spirit, because he knoweth he hath a pardon? It is but a sordid and gross conceit in the heart of men to think, that there can be no humiliation for sin, except they be in despair; I say, that when Christ reveals himself to your spirits, you shall find your hearts more wrought upon with sweet meltings, relentings and breakings of spirit, when you see your sins pardoned, than in the most despairing condition you can be in. It hath been often taken notice of, of many malefactors, that though when they have come to the place of execution their

to Christ, and deal with his blood for the pardon of it; and not stay until a solemn, formal confession is made, as if his pardon depended on that; we are to confess sin, as Aaron confessed the sins of Israel over the scape-goat; and we should confess ours over a sin-bearing Saviour, with a view to their being laid on him, and satisfied for by him; and never does a soul more ingenuously confess sin, or more kindly mourn for it, than when he has the clearest view of the free, and full forgiveness of it, by the blood of Christ. Gill.}

hearts have been so hard that they could not shed a tear; yet, when they have heard their pardon read, and seen themselves out of danger, their hearts, that were so hard before, have melted into floods of tears; and so, I say, that heart that could not relent to see the filthy loathsomeness of sin, while he did not see his pardon, yet, after the knowledge of that, melts into tears, and hath such relenting that none in the world can have, but he that knoweth it. I say, the grace of God, which brings salvation, having appeared unto men, doth more teach them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world than all the arguments besides can persuade men, even for the glory of their God, the manifestation of their thankfulness to him, and the being fruitful unto others. {Tit.2:11-13}

We are to walk in every way that God hath chalked out unto us; but if we think our righteousness, deep humiliation, large relents of spirits, sorrow for sin, and our confession thereof, must make our way to the bowels of Christ, take heed lest you set up a false Christ. When you bring anything to Christ, you deprive him of that which is his greatest prerogative, and give it to your fasting and humiliations; it is the prerogative of Christ alone to bring you to himself. But, you will say, all the promises of pardon run with this proviso, in case men humble themselves, and do this and that, then pardon is theirs; but otherwise it is none of theirs; take heed of such doctrine. We have had Arminianism exceedingly exploded among us hitherto, and there hath been much complaint against it; but if we conceive that God, in pardoning sin, hath an eye to confession of it, here is the doing of works for pardon of sin; and how far short this comes of Arminianism, let all the world judge.

Beloved, consider I beseech you, doth God give grace upon obedience? What power shall work such a disposition? Supposing a branch be a branch of the wild vine that is mentioned in the prophet Isaiah, such a branch as there is death in it, what shall alter the nature of that deadness in it? Must not there be an engrafting of it into the true vine? Must not the wild olive be put into the sweet olive, before it cease to be wild, and become a good branch? You must know that we are all wild vines, bringing forth fruit unto death; how shall our qualities be changed? Must we be changed first, and then being changed, come to Christ? Is not Christ, the vine, who by virtue of our union to himself doth change our corrupt and bad natures? Do you think, that a branch of the wild olive, must become a branch of the true olive before it can be put into it, and then, in regard of that, be put into it? Oh; that the order of Christ may be established with you; namely, his beginning to close with men in blood, and the power of Christ thus beginning with them, framing their spirits to himself, in such a manner that neither men, nor angels, nor any other creature, can frame any spirit for him, till he come himself. It is certain, without him you can do nothing; as he saith of himself, {Jn.15:5,} and as the Apostle confesseth of himself, {Rom.7:18,} how will you, therefore, have gracious or previous dispositions and qualifications, as you call them, before Christ can own you; when as it must be Christ, and he given, that must frame these dispositions in you?

You must, you say, have eyes to see your folly and misery, and be humbled in the sense thereof, and hearts to close with Christ, and then he will become yours. How contrary is this, to the Lord, by his prophet in Isaiah 42:6,7, "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." Who opens these blind eyes, but Christ, as he is given for a covenant to open them? Can men see either their own folly, or behold their need of him, or conceive the sweetness of him, while they are stark blind? They are stark blind, till Christ, after he is given for a covenant, opens the eyes of men. To think that men have their eyes opened before they come to Christ, whereas when they come to him, he opens them, is to say, we see when we are blind.

You shall see, in Scripture, that Christ is given so freely to men, that all considerations are taken away from them, that all discouragements may be taken from a sinner, that if he come to him, and close with him, if he have a heart, he may come without bar.

To conclude; if there be any willingness in thee to close with Christ, so that fain thou wouldest close with him if thou mightest; I say, thou may'st receive all the embraces of Christ into thy arms,

and receive his kisses;⁶ upon thy mouth, with as much boldness, and confidence, as any believer in the world; for it is not for their sakes, for their amendments and reformation, their righteousness or holiness, that Christ hath mercy on them; but for his own sake it is that he embraces them, and manifests his love unto them.

⁶ {Note: Kisses, as they are indications of, so they are incentives to love. When the truths of the Gospel come with power upon a sinner's heart, they let in, not only a great deal of light, but also a large measure of love; faith comes hereby, and that works by love, both to Christ and to his Gospel. Gill;}