

SERMON XXXI

THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH

Tobias Crisp

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6}

Two things I have proposed to be considered in this passage. 1. Whose iniquities they are, that the Lord hath laid upon Christ; which, after we had handled, we come to the 2nd, how persons may know that their iniquities in particular, are laid upon him. Here I must crave your patience a little, being desired by some, to clear up some particulars formerly delivered, being stumbled at by some, to whom they seem not to be evident enough.

There were two things proposed for the revolving, of this question, How a person may know in particular his own interest in Christ?

1. I discovered the dubiousness of the way that many persons go for the resolving of this case, laying down such arguments, and proposing them in such a way as can never give them satisfaction; that is, a proposing to themselves signs and marks from their sanctification, to be resolved of their interest in Christ. I instanced three particulars; universal obedience; sincerity of heart; and, love of the brethren. Now some have conceived, that herein I have directly stuck at the heart of these particulars, as if I attempted the overthrow of them; but mistake not, beloved, I spake only of their insufficiency to give a satisfactory resolution of the great case depending; they are of excellent use in their own kind, sphere, and orb; but, when they are set on work to do those things that are beyond their power, men do but entangle themselves, instead of getting themselves loose. Universal obedience, as it is practiced, leaves the case very doubtful, in respect of its many imperfections; and, in that regard, it cannot of itself determine the case, but there will be scruples arising from it.

I said, there is no such thing in the world, as universal obedience, if you take it according to the property of speech; for that is obedience to all things; that is the true meaning of the phrase. Now, there is no man under heaven that is obedient to all things, for "in many things we sin all," saith James. It cannot then be universal, so long as there are so many particular failings in the hearts and ways of men. Universal, some say, in the purpose of the heart, though not in practice. I answered, the purposes of the heart are many times extremely corrupt; there is not a constancy of actual purpose of heart toward the will of God; many times there is an indisposition of heart; and averseness of spirit, to many things God requires; witness the case of affliction, what contesting is there with the will of God in bearing it! What groaning under it with a kind of impatience at least! Not that pleasure taken in it as God intends, and as the thing itself deserves. Afflictions are for the good of God's people; "they shall bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, to them that are exercised therein;" and, as they are good, they must not be distasteful, but rather affected; as a man prizes such a physician that can bring a medicine to cure his disease; yea, the very medicine itself, though bitter for the present. But how far the hearts of men are from being thus disposed, even believers themselves {for they have too many such frailties} appears by their own experience. Where is that constant disposition and propensity of their spirits, to the whole will of God?

And yet, I say, if there were a kind of obedience in men, yet that cannot be an evidence to determine the case of itself; that which must be an evidence, must be proper and peculiar; if it be common to unbelievers and enemies of God with believers, it is no distinguishing mark; but, in Phil.3:6, the apostle saith of himself, that while he was a persecutor, even at that time, "according to the righteousness of the law. He was blameless." He walked strictly and exactly, without blame, and

yet was a persecutor. Now, I ask this question, suppose that a man's heart tells him that he walks blameless according to the righteousness of the law, as the heart of Paul said; this will not prove him to be in a better estate than he was, who was even then a persecutor, not converted to the faith; therefore there may be a walking blamelessly in the righteousness of the law before conversion. For my part, I desire to see further light in this truth; but, to me, it seems, as plain and clear as the day, that from the express words of the apostle himself, a blameless heart there may be, and certainly strict to all the will of God, and yet a man be in the state of nature.

For sincerity of heart, in doing things to the Lord, with respect to him, what that is the apostle expresses in the true nature of it, saying, "servants, obey your masters in all things, in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord." There is a singleness of heart to the Lord, when the heart hath an eye to him in all that it doth. If it hath any wrong ends, it is not sincerity, because that is sincerity that is done for the Lord. Now, where shall a man find rest in the examination of his own sincerity, that he may have peace by it, so long as men find, upon examination, so much self? I dare be bold to say, that believers have actually in their thoughts, themselves in their performances, more than they have God in them; and they find stronger impressions in their spirits to do, with regard to themselves, than to the Lord. It is an infirmity in them, and I grant; they may not allow of it; but the thing is true, there is a constant selfishness in that which men do. If therefore, upon examination, the heart must of necessity accuse itself, as being extremely selfish, how can a man conclude certainly, a sincerity, where there is so much opposition and contrariety to it? But suppose there may be sincerity; let it be granted, people may be sincere in their own hearts. The Jews that were enemies to Christ, had sincerity according to God, that is the true property of sincerity; Rom.10:2,3, "for I bear them record that they have a zeal of God," here is the fervency of sincerity; a "zeal for God." If their zeal had been never so hot, had it been for themselves, though it seemed for God, yet it had not been sincerity; but if there be zeal, and that for God, this is sincerity, in the proper nature of it; and if they had taken a wrong course, and gone a wrong way in their zeal for God, it might not be true sincerity; but they had a zeal for God, and this was exercised in the will of God himself; for they went to establish their own righteousness, and that "was according to the law of Moses," as you see in ver.3-5. Here is that we describe to be sincerity, namely, earnestness of heart, in the doing of that which the law of God requires, and that for God himself; and yet, "they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God;" where it is plain, they were enemies to the Lord, and Christ, while they had such zeal to God.

As for the point of love to the brethren, there is much stumbling, as I conceive, at that raised from the text, I John 3:14. Hence men conclude that the love of the brethren is an infallible mark of itself, that they are the children of God in Christ; for answer to it, I think the apostle may be understood in this passage of one believer knowing another, by the love expressed one to another. But you will say, "why may he not, mean as will, we may know ourselves by it?" I answer this, and profess, let us love never so well, there will be cause of suspicion, or occasion at the least, that our love is not sound, such as it should be; for if we understand how the apostle describes the love of the brethren, {I Cor.13:1-8,} where he recites many circumstances, qualities, or properties, essential to it; as that "love seeketh not her own, love is not puffed up, it envieth not;" with many others; I say, if a person will but examine his love to the brethren, by those many particulars in that place, I know his heart cannot but tell him that he is exceeding faulty in all these; it will tell him, I am quite contrary to this rule in my heart; I have, and do much seek myself in the love of my brethren; I am much puffed up over them; I have been too much a censurer of their ways; I have exalted myself too high, &c. I say, a true enlightened, tenderhearted man, that can but look back and search into the several turnings and windings of his own heart, concerning the love that he hath to the brethren, will find his heart will be still accusing him, and as long as it is, surely it is not speaking peace; where there is an accusation brought against a man, there is not an absolving, or discharging him by the same voice; but the love that we have to the brethren, is exceeding blame-worthy, in regard of the imperfection of it; and all that blame-worthiness will stare in a man's face, and accuse him as defective in it. Now, if there be suspicion in the heart, there cannot be quietness in the mind.

But to go on; I do not determine peremptorily, that a man cannot, by way of evidence, receive any comfort from his sanctification;¹ I will give you somewhat for the clearing of my judgment, which I know is according to truth; namely, that the Spirit must first reveal the gracious mind of the Lord to our spirits, and give us faith to receive that testimony, and to sit down as satisfied with it, before ever any work of sanctification can possibly give any evidence; but when the testimony of the Spirit is received by faith, and the soul sits down satisfied with it, then all the gifts of the Spirit bear witness together with it, and with faith.

In brief, beloved, all the righteousness that ever mere man reached unto, since the fall, of itself, was never able to say, upon good grounds, such a person is a child of God; nay, I will go higher, the very word of grace is not able to speak to a soul, till the Spirit of the Lord speaks; this seems strange; but, beloved, give me leave to appeal a little to your own experience; for how many times, have some of you heard such words, of grace as revealed in the gospel, published unto you; as may revive the hearts of men! It may be, you have read them over, meditated on them, and endeavored to reason out your comfort from them; and yet all this while, they have been dumb to your spirits; they have been like a dry tree, or rather a tree in winter, without the appearance of sweetness from them, or in them; at another time, the same word of grace is marrow and fatness to your spirits; what should make such difference, that a man should find fatness in it at one time, and yet should be so dry to him at another? All the difference lieth in this; when the Spirit of the Lord will speak himself with the word of grace, it shall be sweet and satisfactory; when he will be silent, the word shall not speak anything; for, indeed, that is but the trumpet of the Spirit; if the Spirit blow, the trumpet makes a sound; if it blow not, it makes none at all; as he speaks in the word of grace, so the melody of it ravishes the ears and hearts of believers; but if he himself will be silent, there is no music in the word.

I came further to consider how a man may then come to know his portion or interest in Christ. First, the Spirit of grace speaking to the hearts of God's people, according to the word of grace, is the revealing evidence. I cleared this out of such testimonies of scripture, as I thought none could have contradicted; he is therefore called the Comforter, because he speaks peace to the people of God; he is therefore said to take of the things of Christ, and show them to them; he is therefore called the "Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." No man under heaven can say God is my Father, with propriety, but by the Spirit of adoption; men may with lip service say, our Father, but in spirit, comfort, confidence, and knowledge, that the Lord is their Father, it is impossible any should say it, but by the Spirit of adoption; "the spirit itself bearing witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God."

To draw to a conclusion of this subject; this Spirit of the Lord always speaks according to the word of grace; but doth not receive its credit from it. The word of grace is the visible voice of the Spirit; his testimony to the hearts of believers, is the hidden voice; and it is impossible they should jar, because both proceed from one and the self-same Spirit of truth; therefore, there is always a necessary argument between the word of grace and the voice of the Spirit; so that you may safely conclude, if there be a voice speaking in the heart of a man, contrary to the word, it is not the voice of the Spirit; yet, nothing is able to satisfy a person, that such a voice is the voice of the Spirit indeed, but he himself that speaks it. I will go higher; no person under heaven is able, upon satisfied grounds, to say, the word of grace is the word of God, but by the Spirit's testimony. All the arguments in the world can never satisfy men with conviction, that this book is the word of God, but the Spirit of the Lord bearing witness, concerning the truth of it. I know this is taken to be a strong argument, and thought to be convincing in the judgment of most men, to prove that the word of grace is the word of God, namely, the exceeding power and force it hath upon the spirits of men; for, say they, nothing but the word of God could have such predominance over them. Beloved, I beseech you to be not mistaken, as if I spake against the word of grace, or the truth or authority of it; only let me show you the true foundation, whereby you may be enabled to rely upon it, and be convinced of the truth and

¹ So that the Doctor does not deny sanctification to be an evidence of a man's state, and of his interest in Christ, and title to heaven, only of a lesser kind, and after-evidence; and, indeed, faith, which he makes to be the receiving evidence, is a branch, and a principle branch, of sanctification. Gill

infallibility of it; for I dare be bold to say, human words work sensibly, as strong impressions upon the spirits of wicked men, as ordinarily the word of grace works upon the spirits of believers. For example, to a person condemned to die, looking for his execution, there comes a word of grace from the king that his life shall be spared, what impressions do these words work upon that condemned wretch! What a print hath it upon his spirit! What raptures of joy doth it produce! I think there are few believers that will say; they are ordinarily sensible of stronger impressions upon their own spirits by the word of God, than such malefactors have by the words of a prince. Again, a fierce and tyrannical master comes to his servant, or scholar, speaking big and terribly to them, sometimes strikes them with terror and amazement; sometimes also, the terror of a king's voice hath struck dead a person against whom he was incensed; another hath gone home, and never enjoyed himself again, out of the extremity of the grief, and deepness of impression such words have had upon his spirit; such dread the words of a king work upon the spirits of men, especially if there be dependency upon him. Oh then, thinks he, all is lost and gone, he is undone forever, if the king do but frown upon him. The thundering of the law works terrors upon the spirits of men, it is true; but, certainly, beloved, there hath been well-nigh as deep and strong impressions made in the natural hearts of men, from the terrible words of a king, as frown the terror of the law; at least, so strong, that many times you are not able to find such from any divine words, as from such human words; and therefore, such an argument as this, though it be probable and useful, yet it is not infallible to prove the truth of the word of God, and so give satisfaction to the spirits of men, of the truth of it; the proof indeed, that must be satisfying in conclusion is this, the Spirit of the Lord satisfies the spirits of believers, that it is his word; and so, after much dispute, the most solid divines resolve the case, that he must determine the point, and resolve it; not but that there is an unchangeable stability in the word, and a man may be satisfied of it; all that I aim at, is this, to reduce you to that principle that indeed gives true satisfaction, and not dwell only in such that will admit of some dispute.

Now, to the second evidence, whereby persons may come to know their interest in Christ; the former was a revealing and working evidence; this we shall now speak of is a receiving evidence, and this is the faith of a believer; though the Spirit of the Lord reveals his mind to men, yet they are not fully resolved concerning it, till by faith they receive it.

An honest man may come and tell a friend, there are such and such lands settled upon thee; but he is not resolved of it, though the man speak never so true, except he give credit unto him, and so receives his testimony; but when a man first speaks the truth, and his credit is such, that he to whom he speaks receives it, then he is satisfied, but not till then.

The Spirit of the Lord brings the thoughts of God to the elect, telling them, that he is their salvation; now, until they receive this testimony, and believe it, they are never resolved; but when they receive and believe it, that it is a true testimony, then they sit down satisfied.

When a man brings word such legacies are given you, and you credit him, then you are satisfied, but not before. Concerning this evidence of faith, I shall propose two things to your consideration. 1. How the scriptures plentifully authorize faith, to this business of evidencing our interest in Christ. 2. What kind of evidence this believing holds out in scripture.

1. If you will mark the scripture well, you find that it authorizes faith in a believer, to give full evidence concerning interest in Christ; for the clearing of this, a solid argument that necessarily infers a conclusion, is a full proof of it; look into Acts 13:38,39, and you will see, how necessarily it must be received, that faith gives interest in the privileges of Christ. "Be it known unto you therefore, {saith the Apostle,} men and brethren, that through this man {namely, Christ} is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Out of this text I argue thus, if there be justification from all things where there is believing, this believing is a proof of it; the conclusion that necessarily follows from the argument, also infers the proof of it, and its validity; the apostle here endeavors to prove, that every person that believes is justified from all things; if therefore thou dost believe, this is a certain truth that thou art justified from all things, from which thou couldst not be justified by the law of Moses. It is an undeniable argument, because the apostle affixes justification to believing; he doth not give the

effecting of justification to it; but annexes it to believing; as the evidence; every one that believes is justified, though it is not believing, by the worthiness of its own act, that justifies the person.

But I will clear it further; some will be moving objections against the effectualness of faith, as the Spirit of the Lord is in it to satisfy the spirits of believers concerning their interest in Christ; therefore look into Rom.15:13, where the apostle proves a fulness of evidence in faith, concerning all things that may fill up joy. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Do but observe the phrase well; all joy and peace, in the fulness thereof, come to persons in believing. What is it for a man to have fulness of joy? This consists not only in the apprehension of goodness in a thing, but in the propriety of it, and the security that it shall not miscarry. A man may know there is great treasure in such a place, and not joy in it, if it be not his; and if it be his, and in danger to miscarry, and be taken from him, it doth not fill him with joy; there is not this joy, except there be assuredness that it is not in danger, then is there joy indeed; for even all the fulness of Christ for the sons of men, though apprehended for the extent of it in general, hath not power to work joy in their spirits, that cannot apprehend this fulness to themselves in particular; men may come to have some glimpse of it, but they only joy in it, that find their names written, and have propriety in it.

Again, though there be propriety, yet except the person be secure from miscarriage in it, he will be in fear and sadness; so that there cannot be fulness of joy; therefore it must follow, that where there is that, there is not only propriety, but also security, in respect of the safety of it. Now, saith the apostle, "God fills you with all joy in believing;" but except believing could appropriate the excellencies of Christ to particular persons, and secure them concerning the safety of these, that they shall not miscarry, this believing could not be the instrument of all joy; therefore, it must needs follow, there is a satisfying-ness in believing, in that there is all joy in it and by it. A man that is at law, is never quiet, till his case be determined; as long as there is fear that the sentence of the court, or suspicion, the cause will go against him, so long he is unquiet; but when the sentence is given, and given for him, then he is at rest; even so, you can never be at quiet, if your hearts be enlightened and convinced of your natural estate, but you must be full of fear, till you know the sentence of the Lord concerning you; it must therefore follow, that that which brings peace to men must clear to them what that sentence is; for, saith the apostle, "the God of hope doth fill you with all joy and peace in believing." In believing, then, the soul receives peace, that is, it receives the answer and sentence of the Lord concerning itself, even the sentence of peace; for there cannot be peace till it be satisfied of this.

If this testimony will not serve, you shall find how the Holy Ghost appropriates full assurance to faith; and therefore, faith must needs be a very excellent and satisfying evidence. In Col.2:2, you see how clear the apostle is in this; for in verse 1, he tells the Colossians, what conflicts he had with his spirit in their behalf, to this end, that "their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Observe, he speaks here of the riches of full assurance of understanding and acknowledgment of the Lord Jesus, with God and the Father. What is it for a man to understand and acknowledge the Lord Jesus, but believing? To acknowledge him, is to believe in him. Now saith the apostle, there are riches of full assurance in this understanding and acknowledgment; and, in verse 5, he tells us expressly, wherein, this full assurance of understanding and acknowledgment stands; "joying {saith he} and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ." So then, that stedfastness of faith is the full assurance of understanding, and acknowledging the Lord Jesus Christ. Some grant that faith hath an evidencing power in it, only as it concurs with other evidences, and so gives full assurance; but the apostle doth not only appropriate assurance, but even fulness of assurance, to faith alone.

But, you will say, perhaps the text is somewhat dark, and may be otherwise understood. That I may therefore clear the matter more fully, and stop the mouths of all gainsayers, I will allege the words of the apostle, that assurance is of faith, and even full assurance; "let us draw near {saith he} with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." {Heb.10:22} Here you see expressly, that full assurance is applied to faith, and he lays down the

ground of it in the next words, "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." Now, what is it that can sprinkle and purge the accusing and corrupt conscience, but the blood of Christ? If there be any sin upon it, whereby it becomes an accusing and an evil one, that cannot be pacified and quieted, till the blood of Christ comes "that takes away the sin of the world;" and this is that which sprinkleth the conscience, from whence there is full assurance of faith; so that faith fetches full assurance to the spirits of men, not from within themselves, but from without, even from that that sprinkles the hearts of an evil conscience.

Now then, if faith receives a full assurance, certainly it must needs be an unquestionable evidence, with which a man may be satisfied in all enquiries. What is the end of enquiries, but the assurance of a thing? When a man is already assured, especially fully assured of a thing, he never enquires any further, or calls for more witness. Look but upon your trials at law; there comes in one witness, and he speaks point blank {as they say} to the case, and makes it as clear as the day; by him the judge is fully satisfied of the case; he will bid all other witnesses stand by, he hath heard enough. So the apostle tells us, there is a "full assurance of faith;" doth faith assure a man, wherefore doth he then enquire further? When he hath enquired his heart out, he can attain but to assurance, at most but to full assurance, he can but be satisfied; if he have this by believing, what need he look further? If witness comes in, even after a full testimony is given, it doth but spend time, for the first witness hath given sufficient satisfaction; so, if the Spirit of the Lord come in, and bear witness, that such a soul is interested in Christ; when he, and the faith of a believer, give their evidence, and raise full assurance from that evidence given, for what purposes serve all other evidences?

Consider one place more, and it is of great moment, I John 5:7-10; where the apostle speaks as much of witnessing, as is spoken in all the scripture; "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are one; and there are three that bear record on earth, the spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one." Mark that expression well, "these three agree in one." What are these three that agree in one, you say? There is a great deal of dispute about the meaning of spirit, water, and blood. Beloved, the dispute will end, if you observe the next words, "he that believeth in the Son of God, hath the witness in himself;" they agree in one; in what? In believing; as much as to say, a man hath as much witness and evidence as can possibly be desired, when he hath believing within himself; for in that agree these three witnesses, the spirit, the water, and blood. The apostle clears the matter farther, how there is sufficient evidence in believing alone, in the next words; "he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar;" he being willing to clear this, that faith is sufficient to resolve a soul of its interest in Christ, doth it thus; when a man believes it, then he takes God's bare word, without any other testimony, and sits down, and subscribes to it; but, when he dares not believe that word, but requires more evidence to satisfy him, that God hath appointed, but will have signs and marks drawn from his own works, as well as the word of grace, to give him assurance, he makes God a liar. How so? Because he doth not take God for a God of truth, which when he hath spoken, will not sit down with it, but will call for further evidence. But, when men seek after signs and marks to testify to God's word of grace, that he hath spoken, or God shall not be believed, what is this but to make him a liar? Suppose a man brings tidings of such large deeds of gift; but, except another come and testify with him, he shall not be believed; what do we esteem him better than a liar? I am sure he doth not take him for a true man, if he did he would be satisfied with his testimony; this is the sense of the apostle, "that he that believes not, makes God a liar," in his testimony to the sons of men; this makes it clear that there is a large evidencing faculty in believing.

Let us now see what kind of evidence believing gives; for as I said before, it is not a revealing, nor an affecting, but it is a receiving evidence; or it is an evidence as it receives that testimony which the Spirit holds out, applying it unto the heart; it is an evidence, as an officer in court is one upon trial of a case, that speaks nothing of his own knowledge, but produces records, and testifies to the authenticity of them; the life of evidence is materially in the records themselves, but the officer is an evidence, as he asserts the truth of them.

It is even so with faith; the Spirit of the Lord makes the records, and speaks them to the heart; faith comes in, and receives the truth of them. In brief, faith is an evidence, as it takes

possession of that which the Spirit of the Lord reveals and manifests to a person; I say, as it takes possession, or as it enters upon the deed of gift, the Spirit of the Lord brings to the heart. Possession is a good evidence in land; let a man prove he had lawful possession given him, and that proves his title to be good. The Spirit indeed, makes the title good, but faith makes good the entry and possession, and so clears the title to us, though good in itself before; faith is nothing else but the receiving of Christ, that enters upon the possession of him.

To apply it to our purpose in hand; would you know that the Lord hath laid your iniquities upon Christ? So you must know it thus; is there a voice behind thee, or within thee, saying, particularly to thee in thyself, "thy sins are forgiven thee?" Dost thou see this voice agree with the word of grace, that is, dost thou see it is held out to most vile and wretched creatures, as thou art? And, upon this revelation of the mind of the Lord by his Spirit, according to that word, doth he give thee to receive that testimony of the Spirit, to sit down with it as satisfied, that, upon that agreeing with the word of grace, thou makest full reckoning thou hast propriety in this, particularly to thyself? If thou dost receive the testimony of the Spirit, according to that word, here is thy evidence; thou hast thy propriety and portion in this. How will this be made good, you say? Consider John 1:12,13, "but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Mark first, that receiving him, is called believing on him; or in his name; and, observe what follows, "as many as did receive him, to them he gave power;" so it is in our translation; but in the original, the word may be rendered, he gave them right or privilege, or he gave a warrant, as I may so say. As when kings give out their warrants, they thereby authorize persons to such and such offices; so the receiving of Christ hath this consequence, namely, Christ's authorizing or warranting a person to be an adopted son; from whence it follows most clearly, that when persons believe, there needs no more but that, to give them propriety, to authorize and warrant them to claim the adoption of sons.

But you will say, there is a dead faith in the world, and a man may presume of receiving Christ; and therefore there must be something to give witness to faith, before the case be resolved by faith itself. I answer, wherever there is a receiving of Christ indeed, there cannot be presumption in that act; let the person be what he will, if there be but a real receiving, and true believing; for the text saith, "as many as believe in his name, he gave them right to be the sons of God;" mark also what Christ himself saith, "he that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast him off." What is coming to Christ, you say? Christ tells you himself, "he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believes in me shall not thirst;" that which he calls coming first, he calls believing next; so that coming and believing are one; as if he had said, "he that believes in me, shall in no wise be cast away."

But you say, I am such and such a sinner, such a gross, vile, and filthy creature; guilty of so many abominable sins; this is that which will cause him to cast off those that come to him. Nay, beloved, let me tell you, this is quite contrary to the text; for he saith expressly, "I will in no wise cast out;" I say, even enmity itself, which is the highest pitch of sinfulness, is no bar to the receiving of Christ, or any bar to the enjoyment of his privileges in receiving of him; "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." {Rom.5:10} But you say, if there be not fruits of faith, that faith is a dead faith, therefore there must be something to evidence with it, or else its evidence is nothing worth.

Beloved, that which is only credited for another's sake, hath no credit at all given to it; for if a witness come, and swear clearly to a case, and his testimony will not be taken or received, except another come in and give testimony to him, and what he hath sworn; the first man's testimony is of no force, because it is not received for itself; so if faith be not able of itself to give testimony, or must not be credited when it doth, except something will come and testify for it, to give credit unto it, its testimony is of no worth at all.

Again, that which hath the whole essence of faith is not a dead, but a living faith; now, the whole essence of faith, is nothing but the echo of the heart, answering the foregoing voice of the Spirit, and word of grace. "Thy sins are forgiven thee," saith the Spirit and word of grace; "my sins are

forgiven me," saith faith. And the soul that can assume thus from the Spirit and word of grace, hath the whole essence of believing; it is true, there are fruits of faith, as love by which it works, and several others, which are begotten of God by his Spirit through it; "for the grace of God that brings salvation, appearing;" that is, being apprehended by faith, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." {Tit.2:12} It is not faith that originally begets any grace, but it is the conduit pipe through which the Lord is pleased from himself, and of his own accord, to convey the other gifts of the Spirit. If therefore, the echo to the voice of the Spirit, and word of grace, be the essence, nay, the whole essence of believing; this is certain, where there is receiving or believing, there cannot be a dead faith. The truth is, that faith which fetches its evidence from man's righteousness, is dead; for the ground of a lively faith, is righteousness, wholly without a man's self; that faith, therefore, that maketh anything within a man's self its ground, that is not right; for there is no believer but seeth so much filthiness, even in his own righteousness, that his faith necessitates him to go out of himself, and everything in him, and to fetch all argument of righteousness wholly from without, even in Christ the Rock; so then, whatever faith builds itself upon, anything within a man's self is a sandy foundation; the righteousness of Christ, and not of man, being the rock. For a man to believe, I am justified before God, upon this consideration, because I am holy, is to make a man's own sanctity the ground of his faith, and so destroy the nature of true faith. All men receive this principle, that the promises of the gospel, are the grounds of men's believing, and they are nothing else but the free grant of God to men, of his own accord, for his own sake; now to turn the free grace of God, granted unto men, into the righteousness we perform in ourselves, and instead of making that, make man's righteousness the ground of our faith; what is this but to destroy the life of it, and so it must needs be a dead faith indeed?

In a word, if any remain unsettled in what I have delivered or desire further satisfaction therein, I entreat them to set down in their memories, or notes, what I have delivered; and likewise to bear in mind the allegations and proofs I have brought for the confirmation of the same, and I shall endeavour to give them satisfaction. For my own part, the Lord knows, all I aim at is, that our God, in our Saviour Jesus Christ, might have the pre-eminence in all things; that not only our salvation and justification might have their rise from Christ alone, but that our peace of conscience might be fetched from thence; and that he that gives to us the great things of the gospel, might speak the same things by himself, or by his Spirit, unto us, according to his word, and so we rest satisfied upon that. If any thing swerves from this principle in all that I have delivered, I myself abhor it. To make the evidence of the Spirit, according to the word of grace, and the faith of a believer, no infallible testimonies of our interest in Christ, must of necessity produce this effect, to rest and build upon our own works, and to give the glory of our peace of conscience and comfort thereunto; but to preach that it is only these that evidence to us our interest in Christ, is to give unto the Lord Jesus the honor and glory of all, and to assume nothing at all unto our own works.

Thus, beloved brethren, you have heard the admirable grace of God. Oh; let not there be such a heart in any, as to turn it into wantonness! Oh; let not any one continue in sin, because so much grace hath abounded; but let it "teach you to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live godly, righteously and soberly in this present world." For my own part, whatever others may think, I abhor nothing so much as a licentious undertaking to continue in any sin, because such fulness of grace hath abounded; and I hope assuredly, that the God of grace and mercy, will keep by his power to salvation, all those whom he delivers; and that he will so sow the seeds of grace in their hearts, that they may not sin, that is, presumingly break out of purpose, in hope of pardon before-hand; and I hope also, that God will meet with such as are disturbers of the truth of Christ, and peace of the gospel, by their base and vile conversation. And I recommend to them {if there be any such here} the reading of the Epistle of Jude, where they may see the fearful wrath of God upon such persons as abuse the grace of God to sin; that because God freely pardons it, therefore they will sin, and presume to do that which is ever so filthy. O beloved, let not the love of the Lord God in Jesus Christ thus manifested, be so basely requited at your hands; seeing he hath so freely loved you, and given Christ to you, that you might be to the praise of the glory of his grace, in a godly and Christian

conversation, whereunto you are ordained. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." {Eph.2:10} And I beseech you to always remember that you cannot answer the free love of God towards you any other way, but by showing it in a fruitful conversation in the world; and considering that one end for which the Lord did redeem you, was, that you might be a "peculiar people," to himself, "zealous of good works." {Tit.2:14}