

SERMON XXXIV

REVELATION OF GRACE, NO ENCOURAGEMENT TO SIN

Tobias Crisp

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." {I Jn.2:1,2}

Of all the prophets, Daniel alone had this prerogative, to be called, "the greatly beloved of the Lord;" and this greatness of his endearedness was expressed in the manifestation of the riches of the gospel unto him, in a more singular manner than to others; so the Lord expresses it by his angel, Dan.9:23, 24, "thou art greatly beloved; {I come to tell thee;} therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision, seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." And among all the disciples that conversed with Christ, this disciple John had the privilege which Daniel had among the prophets, to be called "the beloved disciple;" and as an argument of that, he is admitted to lie in the bosom of Christ; and of all the apostles, you will find none of them hit so upon the great grace of God to the sons of men, as he doth. Compare the gospel which he wrote, with other evangelists, and you will find a vast difference between the manifestation of the free grace of God to them, and to him. He also writing this epistle, follows the same strain; in the former chapter he delivers unto us, two admirable passages; the one is, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all our sins;" and the other, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" two great manifestations of the absolute freeness of the grace of God to the sons of men. Now, in chap.1:4, he declares one main end, for which he publishes this free grace of God; "these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full;" implying that there is fulness of joy in the grace here revealed; and it is fit, that little children that have fellowship with the Father and the Son, should have the knowledge of it for that end.

Now, whereas he speaks of God's forgiving freely, he would not have men mistake, as if his revealing pardon of sin intimated, that people did not sin anymore; and there he anticipates it in verse 8. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Sin we do; but the grace of God stands in this, that when we sin, it is forgiven, and it is an act of justice for God to forgive it. Beloved, I perceive the world clamors extremely against the fearful fruits {as they conceive} of such publishing the grace of God to men. Tell men their sins are forgiven, and whatsoever they commit, being believers, they shall do them no hurt; this is the way, say they, to bring all manner of licentiousness into the world; this opens the flood-gates for floods of sins to overflow the church. But the apostle prevents this great objection, and not only so, but establishes the direct contrary to the inference men make from the free grace of God, in the words of my text. And observe it well, were it not an apostle of Christ that spake these words, there are many zealots in the church would condemn it, not only for heresy, but for the greatest absurdity. This appears plain, for there are two things the apostle drives at in these two verses.

1. An enforcement of something that he would work upon little children, as he calls them, that have fellowship with the Father and the Son.

2. The great argument he useth to prevail with them to embrace that which he would fasten upon them.

The thing the apostle would fasten upon believers was "that they would not sin," because he writes these things to them; the argument by which he would prevail with them to do this, is a strange one in the opinion of most men; "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, &c." Put them together, and it amounts to this; I would have you not to sin; now, the only, and best way, to prevail with you, is, if you commit sin, there is an advocate with the Father, that shall take care that the sin you commit shall do you no hurt; though you sin, he is become the propitiation for your sins; therefore, fear not any hurt that can come to you by them; this is the argument by which he would prevail with them and us against the commission of sin. Now, what an absurd argument seems this, not only to the world, but even to zealous professors, to prevail with men to the forbearance of sin, to tell them before-hand, that if they sin, there is an advocate for them, and he is the propitiation for their sins? There is nothing so vilely calumniated, as publishing this free grace of God to men, in this way, as being the high-way to break out into all manner of sin whatsoever. This, say men, is that which lets go the reins on the neck of libertinism, and makes men take liberty without control, freely to commit any sin. Whoever is of this mind, I must tell him, before I go on, directly crosses the wisdom of God, and gives the lie to the apostle here that presses, with infallibility, how little hurt the knowledge of the pardon of sin can do to persons in Jesus Christ, in that he passes it as an argument to prevail from sin. I beseech you, beloved, not to have any regard to any words I shall say of myself, but as I shall speak the full mind of the Holy Ghost; and I shall give you one point first in general, which is the main scope of the apostle here, and afterwards handle the several branches of it particularly.

First, I say, take his general scope, and then, as the scripture will; evince the truth, so for the truth's sake, receive that which shall be delivered, though for the present, it may seem otherwise.

The point that ariseth out of the words, is this; for a person, who hath fellowship with the Father and the Son, one of the little children, which the apostle speaks of to know, before he commits sin, that there is an "advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for sin;" is so far from being a spur to provoke him to the commission of sin, that it is one of the strongest arguments, and the best motives, to prevail with him to refrain from it.

That you may see the doctrine is no fancy, nor opinion of men, but the clear truth; it appears plainly, that the apostle's business is to take men off from sinning, "these things I write unto you that you sin not;" and then immediately follow these words, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." To what purpose are these words, if not as a motive to prevail with them to the thing he persuades them unto? Nay, he tells us plainly, he writes them on purpose that they sin not. What was it that he wrote to them before? That "the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" and "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" and now, "these things I write unto you that you sin not." Suppose one man should come to another and tell him, there is such a friend of yours, will do such and such good things for you, for he hath told me he intends it; and I tell you, that you may comply with him, that will do all this for you. Beloved, is not compliance to this man, provoked by the kindness revealed he will show? Yea, this favour revealed, is the spur to cause him to comply, so the apostle saith, "if any man sin," &c. It is plain, therefore, that the knowing what shall become of our sins beforehand, that they shall do us no hurt, is not the opening a channel to provoke to sin, but a bridle to restrain from it; for you find, by consulting the scripture, that the Holy Ghost is not rare, but very plentiful, in opening this very truth; that the free grace of God, and the security of believers from sin, are therefore made manifest, that they might not sin.

Look into Rom.3:21-26, where the apostle {after he had showed the desperate condition of man by nature, in respect of what he himself could do} begins to relate the admirable free grace of God to men, even while they are enemies, and can do nothing that is good; and then he comes to show, that this revelation of grace is a way to put them upon more obedience, than if it should be hidden from them; observe the words, "but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory 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, &c." Mark how sweetly and excellently he preaches the free grace of God, concluding all under sin, and in a desperate condition in respect of it; and then he brings in the righteousness of Christ, namely, free justification by him that is the propitiation for our sins. But now, what is the fruit of all this? The apostle, in his time, found that the preaching of this free grace unto men, as sinners, raised this very objection that is on foot to this day, and I believe, will be to the end of the world; and, therefore, mark the last verse, {after he had ended this great discourse, and laid down his foundation,} that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law; the objection that comes in, is this; "do we make void the law through faith?" Mark the expression, few will subscribe to this sentence which the apostle delivers; that to preach to men, {though the most desperate sinners under heaven,} there may be as free justification, as for the most righteous man in the world; though by the deeds of the law there be no justification, nothing but condemnation by it, pronounced against him; yet there is justification for such men, and this is the means to restrain from sin. Why, say some, this gives liberty to all uncleanness, for a man to know, that notwithstanding his wicked estate, he shall be justified freely, and be saved, it is impossible he should miscarry. Who will not take liberty to sin, when he knows that though he sins, and his sins be ever so great, all shall be done away, he shall not receive any hurt at all by them? Is not this to make void the law, you will say? Mark the apostle's answer, "God forbid; nay, rather, we establish the law;" that is, the preaching of this doctrine to you that are believers, little children, that have fellowship with the Father, and the Son, will not make void the law; you cannot take liberty from this free grace revealed. The preaching and publishing of this free grace of God, more effectually wins believers to obedience and forbearance of sin, than any other course that can be taken; this, saith he, is a doctrine that establishes the law, and men in obedience to it; and brings them nearer in conformity to it, and doth not set them loose to the breaking and violating of it.

And so the same apostle, in chapter 4 & 5, having gone on in an unparalleled way, in the revelation of the admirable grace of God to Abraham, that he was justified, being yet uncircumcised, to show that we are justified when we are in the worst of sinfulness; and sweetly speaking in chapter 5, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." {vs.6,8,10} And in the latter end of it, having showed the free gift and grace of God to us, being considered as lost persons in Adam, in chap.6:1, meets with the same objection in substance, and answers it more fully than he did before, "what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid; {saith he;} how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" The sum and substance of the objection is this, is there so much grace, that where sin hath abounded, grace abounding much more? Then it seems, that the more sin a man commits, the more will the glory of the grace of God appear in the pardon of it; and so I shall glorify God best, when I commit sin most, will some say; so that the preaching of the abundance of grace, where sin hath abounded, seems to let men loose to the commission of sin as much as is possibly. The apostle answers this with, "God forbid;" as if he had said, God will never suffer any believer, though ever so weak, through any such truth revealed, to break out into sin, or to make any such abominable inference from it; and, he also gives the reason, why they cannot make such use of the grace of God; "how shall we, that are dead unto sin, live any longer therein?" To him, the inference seems so absurd, that he appeals to the adversaries themselves, how it can follow such a proposition. He doth not say positively, that they cannot live in sin, that are dead to it, but he puts the question, how it can be? And whereas, some may answer, yea, they may easily do it; no, saith he, they that are partakers of this grace, are dead unto sin, and how can they live in it, when they are dead to it? The glorious power of this grace revealed, strikes sin dead in men, or rather strikes men dead to sin. "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." And as you shall hear by-and-by, the apostle makes the very grace of God to have that power in it, as to break the neck of sin in the believer. This is the most certain truth of the text, and springs directly from it. There is a death unto sin, where there is a revelation, effectually of the grace of God to

persons to whom it belongs. It brings a dart with it to slay sin. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;" {Rom.8:2,3;} so that, though to reason and sense, the preaching the free grace of God to men, what the Lord hath done for them for his own sake, and that before-hand, may seem to be a licentious doctrine; yet it seems to the apostle there is nothing that more establishes a restraint from sin, than the manifestation of it.

In Rom.11:32-34, the apostle tells us, that "God hath concluded" all in unbelief, that he might "have mercy upon all;" and therefore falls into admiration, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Now what follows; having revealed this unsearchable grace, see how he begins in chapter 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, &c;" that is, I beseech you by the mercies of God that you refrain from sin; what doth he mean? Even the mercies of God, concerning the freeness of grace, manifested before in chapter eleven. Now, if he had been of some men's minds, that the preaching of the free grace of God, were a dangerous doctrine to set men loose to sin, he would never have used the mercies of God, as an argument to prevail with men to refrain from it; he would not have published that, which should have been of such dangerous consequence, but would rather have been silent, so far from revealing of it as an argument to the contrary. Were the revelation of it the way to bring men to licentiousness, it had been his wisdom, and others, to have concealed it, which certainly he would have done, had it been so; but he was not of that judgment; and therefore, in I Cor.6:20, he draws his argument after the same manner; "ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. Observe here, that the injunction which the apostle gives the Corinthians, is, that they should glorify God in their bodies and spirits; and what is the argument by which he would persuade them to it? "You are bought with a price;" but, will some say, it seems I am bought, and the price is laid down for me, I am sure and safe enough, the gates of hell cannot prevail against me; I may live as I list, for no danger will follow me, I may take liberty to sin. Now, if the apostle had known that this consequence would justly have followed upon preaching this grace, he dealt very disingenuously with the people of God, and absurdly by enforcing a conclusion from a ground contrary to it, revealing such a doctrine; therefore, surely he would never have used this expression of being "bought with a price," if he had known that this would follow; but contrariwise, he knew that there is no way will so much prevail with God's people to leave their sins, as by telling them beforehand that they are forgiven, and that they are bought with a price.

In Titus 2:1-10, you will find how the apostle urges Titus, that he press a holy conversation, answerable to old men and women, as also to young men and women, and also suitable to servants; and especially he writes concerning them, that they should not purloin from their masters, but show all faithfulness; but what is the argument by which he urges all these things upon them? "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared" {saith he} "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." {vs.11,12} As much as to say, the Lord hath revealed his salvation to you, and you see it before you, it is brought unto you; and not your well doing, but the grace of God, is that which brings salvation, brings it to you. Then may I do what I list, will some say no, saith he, this grace of God that brings salvation, brings this too, "it teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live godly, and soberly, and righteously in this present world." I say, it is blasphemy against the truth of the Holy Ghost in these several passages of scripture, to maintain, that this is a necessary inference from the revelation of the free grace of God to men beforehand, that thereby men will break out into sin, and give up themselves to it, and that this is the way to give up the reins into the neck of licentiousness.

I will give you but one passage more, and I confess that I have gone further in clearing of this, than I intended; because I know it sticks so in the hearts of cavillers that are ready to spit fire in the faces of those that are asserters and maintainers of the free grace of God in Christ, and the

publishers of it to the people of God. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." {I Jn.3:9} He that is born of God. What is that? It is no more but this, he that is received into grace by Christ, is one with him, in respect of spiritual union between them; to be born of God, and be a new creature is all one; to be new creatures, is to be such as we were not before. More fully, a new creature is one that is translated from himself into Christ, and stands before God as Christ himself, and not as he is in, or of himself. Now, such a person, saith the apostle, sins not; there may be some difficulty in the expression, but you must know, the intention of the apostle, is to take off the objection against the doctrine of the free grace of God being licentious, and the reproach that is unjustly cast upon it; and his meaning is, he cannot take such liberty to sin, or make such licentious uses of the grace of God, as to walk in sinful courses, though his sins shall not hurt him; and the reason is, because his seed abides in him, that is, there is an over-ruling power planted in him, to over-match the propensity of the flesh that remains still in him; that it should not have that power that naturally it would have, by virtue of such a principle, implanted; not that the apostle speaks absolutely of sin, that a child of God shall sin no more; for that were to make himself a liar, and that by his own words; for he saith in another place, "he that saith, he hath no sin, deceives himself, and is a liar;" and Solomon also, who saith, that "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." Eccles.7:20. Therefore by sin in this place, he must needs mean a licentious liberty taken to sin.

Beloved, I know that there are many objections raised against this truth; I shall briefly run through some of them, and if it be possible, clear it unto you, and vindicate the gospel from those abominable untruths cast upon it; and that I will do the rather, because thousands turn away from the grace of God, and dare not venture themselves upon it; because they fear, if they should, they should presently take liberty to sin, and so fall away. Oh; how many have refused their own mercies, and have not received the gospel to this day upon such conceits, that the receiving of it should make them break out unto ungodliness. I know, there are many here present, cannot but witness, they are afraid to close with free grace, though never so fully proved and manifested in scripture, upon this consideration, that it will make them live loosely.

Some will object and say that we know many believers, that do take liberty to themselves, when once they have been acquainted with such free grace that hath been preached.

For answer to this; I say, that if believers, from this grace published, take liberty, they take but what God giveth them; the end of Christ's coming, and preaching the free grace of God to men, is to proclaim liberty to the captives, which are his own people. He came of purpose, "to deliver those, who through fear of death are subject to bondage all their lives long." {Heb.2:15} And therefore, saith Christ, "if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed;" that is, if the Son give you liberty, then you shall have liberty indeed; so that, if believers do take this liberty, upon this ground, they take but that which is their own, purchased unto them by the blood of Christ, and given unto them freely by God their Father.

But some will say, it is a true Christian liberty that Christ allows, and this, indeed, is a liberty he gives men from the captivity and bondage of sin, which they were under before; but many that profess this doctrine, are known to be more slack in the performance of duties, and to grow more and more cold in their zeal, and careless in the practice of religion, and are more regardless of sin; and, in a word, take more liberty to sin, since such grace hath been revealed.

For answer to this, beloved, first, you are not to expect perfection of works from believers in this life, and that they should be free from all manner of sin. I know none of those that have the most indignation against this doctrine of the free grace of God to men, but will yield, that they themselves are not without failings; they ought not, therefore, to aggravate the weakness of their brethren, much less ought the truth of God to be charged with the failings of men. But suppose some do make evil uses of the free grace of God, and are thereby encouraged to be more bold with sin; as they are not to be upheld in it, nor allowed, so ought not their fault to be laid upon that, which effectually teacheth the contrary; for, though believers in infirmity may happen, at some times or other, to be overcome with strength of passion and corruption, to fall into sin, upon consideration that the free grace of God

will save them; yet shall we therefore conceal this grace, because men take that liberty which it doth not give? I say, beloved, if this should be a standing rule, God should never have revealed the gospel to the sons of men. I know no believer so perfect in a course of sanctification and obedience, and abstinence from sin, but his corruptions may occasion him to take advantage, even from the gospel itself, to sin; but certainly, I dare be bold to affirm, there is not any true believer, that maintains this principle, that he may sin without control, because the free grace of God hath abounded; I dare say further, that it is a bold slander, and that no man is able to make it good from true evidence, that there is any that takes constant and frequent liberty to break out into sin, because he knows what shall become of him, and that his sins are done away by the blood of Christ, so that they shall do him no hurt; for, the belief of this, effectually teaches and produces an hatred of sin, and a love of holiness; so that certainly, this is more than can be proved against any true believer, that he should approve himself in any sin upon this ground if indeed believers were in their own keeping, then what sin might they not fall into? But they do not stand upon their own principles; for, saith the apostle, "you are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. {I Pet.1:5} And again, saith the apostle Paul, "the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." {Gal.2:20} It is not a believer now that lives, but it is Christ that lives in him, and he is the predominant principle whereby his actions are swayed; and as he is carried along according to the principles of Christ, he cannot fall into sin. It is true indeed, Christ for reasons best known to him, may let loose the reins wherewith he holds a believer for a while, and then he may fall into sin; but this comes to pass, because the grace of God is hid, and not because it is manifested unto him, and believed by him; and at length the power of Christ shall pull them in again, even by those cords of love, whereby they were first drawn unto him. And the believer hath the engagement of Christ himself, that he will never fail him, nor forsake him; and he hath promised, that his strength shall be made perfect in weakness, and his grace shall be sufficient for him; and that because they are not "under the law, but under grace, therefore sin shall not have dominion over them." {Rom.6:14} So that except Christ will give up one of his own members, to make it his constant practice to abuse and turn the grace of God to sin, he shall not do it; but he hath undertaken, that sin shall not have dominion over that person, that is a member of his.

But some will say, there are many that admire and adore the doctrine of the free grace of God, that are yet notoriously known to live in all manner of licentiousness, and that upon this ground, because their sins are laid upon Christ; and they say, we may live in sin, and do what we list; and what is their argument? Oh, say they, our sins are laid upon Christ, and he died for them.

For answer to this, I profess, I never heard from any person of credit, that there are any such monsters as these, that dare make it their practice to be drunk, to break the Sabbath, to curse and swear, and live in uncleanness, and all manner of vileness, because all their sins are laid upon Christ, that say, they are believers, and they shall do well enough. There are many that are taxed for such but, for mine own part, I cannot say anything to the truth of this charge, by mine own experience, of any man; but, it may be there are such monsters as these are, in the world; and the apostle Paul said, there were such in his time, that because the grace of God abounded, would make sin to abound, and turn it into wantonness; and therefore, it is probable there are such now. And, if there be any such, let me deal plainly with them; for my part, I must account them the greatest monsters upon the face of the earth, the greatest enemies to the church that ever were; and, I say, of such dishonourers of the church, and disturbers of the consciences of God's people, that they are carnal, sensual, and devilish. They are the greatest enemies to the free grace of God, the greatest subverters of the power and purity of the gospel, and the greatest hinderers of the course of it, that are under heaven; and I dare be bold to say that open drunkards, harlots, and murderers, that profess not the gospel of Jesus Christ, come infinitely short of these in abomination; none so wound the sides of Christ, as he that professes the gospel, and yet lives wickedly. And, if there be any such here, let me tell them, their faith is no better than that of devils, for they believe and tremble; and that Christ will have a heavier reckoning with such, when they come to judgment, than any under heaven besides. How many thousands have forsaken their own mercy, and despised the free grace of God, accounting it a

licentious doctrine, and all because of the occasion such persons as these give by their vile conversation? Well, beloved, admit that the free grace of God hath been thus abused by such wretches; look over the whole scripture, hath not both law and gospel been abused, as well as this particular grace? Is not Christ appointed for the rising and falling of many in Israel; a stumbling stone for the falling, and a corner-stone for the rising of many? Is not he set up as a rock for some to build upon, but to dash others in pieces? For a stone of offence to grind many to powder, as well as to be a foundation-stone to others? Assure yourselves, the gospel of Christ, as it makes believers far more holy than they can be that receive it not, so there are some that grow far more filthy, and take occasion from it, to filthiness; but, in the meantime, shall the children want their bread, cause dogs catch at it? Will not you give your child a bit of food all the day, and all the week, because, when you give it them, the dogs snatch at it, and it may be, pull some of it out of their hands? Shall the children starve for want of bread, because dogs abuse it? Neither must we make that bitter and sour; which God hath made sweet. Because wicked men abuse the gospel and the free grace of God, shall the people of God be deprived of that which he hath appointed and provided for them? Let me ask this question of you; did not the Lord himself, from everlasting, as clearly see and know, even long before he did reveal it, how his free grace should be abused, when it should be preached, as we ourselves see it abused? If it be such a dangerous and pernicious thing to preach it, why did he give such a large commission and such a strait charge to his apostles and ministers to preach it to every creature? If the publication of it be so dangerous, who must be blamed for it? Must not God himself that hath commanded us to preach it to every creature? Beloved, if the ministers of the gospel preach the mind of Christ unto his people, shall they be traduced and opposed for it? Do ye not, through us, wound the sides of Christ, and God himself? Is not this to charge him that is wisdom itself, with folly? For if ministers declare this doctrine, it is no more than that which God hath before revealed unto them, and given them commission for; but, if they, out of a carnal and needless fear of liberty, instead of preaching the mind of God, shall preach themselves, {let it be never so specious and well-liked of men,} they shall be judged of God as coming in their own names, and not sent by him.

But you will say, it may be done with caution and limitation.

I answer, let us not be more wary and cautious than God would have us be, to put mixtures of men's doings to the obtaining of his grace, while he himself pours it out to men simply for his own sake, without consideration of anything in them. "The children being yet unborn," speaking of Jacob and Esau, when yet they had done neither good nor evil; it was said unto Rebecca that "the elder shall serve the younger," as it is written; "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." Men will be mincing this truth, and they will tell you, if you keep close unto God, and refrain from sin, especially from gross sin, God will love you, and then you may apply these promises to yourselves; but God speaks plainly and expressly here, "before they had done either good or evil, Jacob have I loved." The grace of God is passed over to men as they are ungodly, "while they are yet enemies and sinners;" men being yet unborn, when there is nothing in them considered, but pollution in blood and all manner of uncleanness, God casts his loving-kindness and establishes it; before Jacob had done anything, or had any good intention to him, God loved him, and appointed this grace for him; this is the grace of God revealed, and he hath revealed it, thus freely to men. Now, is this the Lord himself that speaks it? Hath he given us commission to preach this gospel and grace of his, and shall we be blamed and opposed for speaking those things that he hath commanded us to speak, and hath put into our mouths, saying, we preach a doctrine of looseness and licentiousness; and give men leave to do what they list? And yet all this is but grounded upon carnal fear and needless jealousy of a licentious liberty.

But some will say, the preaching of the terrors of the law, the wrath of God, damnation and hellfire unto men, is a safer way to take men off from sin, than to preach grace and forgiveness of sins beforehand. It is better to lay the foundation first in preaching wrath and damnation.

For answer to this, I say, if we preach wrath and damnation, we must either make them believe they lie under it, and that it shall come upon them; or we must make them believe, that though there be wrath yet it shall not fall upon them. Now, if we tell them of wrath and damnation, and the terrors of the law, and say they are secure from them, they belong not to them, to what

purpose do we tell them of them? We had as good say nothing; if we should terrify them, and make them believe, being believers, for of those I speak, if they commit such sins, they shall be damned, and so come under the wrath of God; and except they perform such and such duties, walk thus and thus holy, they shall come under the wrath of God, or at least he will be angry with them. What do we in this, but abuse the scriptures? We undo all that Christ hath done; we injure and wrong the believers themselves; we tell God he lies to his face; for, if we tell them, that except they do these good works, they shall come under the wrath of God; what is this, but to tell that God lies, and to bring the faithful under a covenant of works? In Isaiah 54:9,10, you can see how it is a belying of God, to say, that believers may come under wrath and damnation, except they do thus and thus; the Holy Ghost speaks there of the time when the seed of Jacob shall inherit the Gentiles, that is, the time of the gospel; in the beginning, the Lord tells us of an everlasting kindness, that should never depart, nor be made void, and he confirms it thus, "for this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee." Observe it well; hath God made such an oath concerning these very times, so firm and stable, that the earth shall be drowned again with water, before it shall be broken; "that he will not be wroth with his people, nor rebuke them anymore?" And shall we tell believers, if they sin, that they shall come under God's wrath; except they do such and such good works, God will be angry with them, after he hath so sworn, that he will not be wroth with his people anymore? Is not this to make God a liar? Again, we do not only, so much as lies in us, make him a liar, but we offer an insufferable affront unto Jesus Christ, and strike at the very heart of the whole office of his Mediatorship. If we say, that God is wroth with believers for whom Christ died, for what end did he suffer death? I say, if this principle be a truth, that God will be wroth with his people, then Christ died in vain; for he could have been but wroth with them, if he had never died; and to bring the people of God under wrath and vengeance again for their sins, is to take away all the virtue of the death of Christ, and to make it of none effect; and how will this stand with Isaiah 53:11, that he beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied? Was God indeed satisfied with the sufferings of Christ, having the sins of men laid upon him, and yet is he wroth and angry with believers for those very sins again, which before he acknowledged satisfaction for? If a man be indebted unto another, and the creditor be willing to take a surety for the debt, and this surety comes in and pays his debt for the man he was bound for, and he thereupon gives a general discharge under hand and seal, shall he yet, by and by, after take the debtor by the throat, and clap him up in jail; when the surety hath answered for the debt before, and after he hath delivered, under hand and seal, that he was satisfied, and that his book was crossed? Who but must say, it is injustice in the highest degree?

What justice, what equity is in this? Beloved, Christ became our Surety; God accepted of him for our debt; he clapped him up in jail, as I may say, for the debt; he took every farthing that he could demand of us; he is now reconciled unto us; he will not now impute our sins to us; he hath acknowledged satisfaction, it is upon record; and now shall he come upon them again with fresh wrath, for whom Christ hath done all this? Shall he charge the debt upon them again? He hath forgotten the death of Christ, it seems, if this be true. Therefore know thus much that it is against his death; a making of it of none effect, and his coming to be in vain, to say that the wrath of God will break out upon believers if they commit such and such sins; and for this I have said, if any man can produce one scripture against it; or show in all the book of God, that it is any otherwise than I have delivered, I shall willingly recant my opinion. But, I see the scripture runs wholly in this strain, and is so full in nothing as in this, that God hath particularly and completely discharged the sins of believers. Oh; then, take heed of falling into that error of the papists, that say, that God hath taken away the sin, but not the wrath of God due to it; that he hath forgiven our sins, but not their punishment; but I beseech you, consider, that as our sins were then upon Christ, he was so bruised for them, that by his stripes we are healed, and the chastisement of our peace was so upon him, that there is nothing else but peace belongs to us; that he beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied; Christ was chastised,

as I have often said, with the rod of God's wrath, that it was quite worn out and wholly spent itself upon him; this is apparent in the very tenor of the new covenant itself; it runs altogether upon free gift and grace; God takes upon himself to do all that shall be in believers, and asking and requiring nothing at all of us; it is true, he saith there shall be the new heart, and a new spirit, and a new law written in the inward parts; but he requires it not of the believer, but he himself hath undertaken to do all, and bestow it upon him. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." {Ez.36:26,27} He doth not say, you must get you new hearts, and new spirits, and your stony hearts taken away; and you must get you hearts of flesh; but I will take the work in hand, and I will see all done myself; all runs freely upon God's undertaking for his people. Seeing, therefore, God doth all things freely of his own accord in us; then, beloved, see how the grace of God is abused by those that would make men believe that it depends upon men's doings, and tell men, if they do not, the wrath of God will follow thereupon. This likewise batters down to the ground, that way of urging men to holiness, which some men hold forth; that if men do not such good works and leave such sins, then they must come under the wrath of God; and the wrath of God is but hidden all this while they do these and these good works; but, if they fail in any of them, then the wrath of God will break out upon them; whereas they ought rather, after the example of the apostle, to excite them to these goods works, because they are already freed from wrath.

Certainly, this, that I have delivered, proves it sufficiently, that the appearing of the grace of God teaches men to do the will of God effectually; the love of God constrains the faithful, and not the fear of wrath.

But to conclude, do not mistake me; in the meanwhile, I have no thoughts as if wrath and vengeance were not to be preached, and made known even to believers; they are to be made known to them, and that as the deserts of sin, and as the means to keep from sin.

But now, some may say, this seems to be against, and to overthrow all that you have delivered.

Observe me well, do not mistake me; you must know, that wrath and vengeance must be revealed to believers, and to restrain them from sin, but not in that way men ordinarily think. I mean thus, wrath and vengeance are not to be revealed, as if believers were to fear them, or as if they should come under them; but as they are secured and freed from them, that so they should fear to commit sin; not for fear of coming under wrath, but out of love, because God hath been so gracious to them, as to deliver them from the weight of so heavy wrath and displeasure, that otherwise must of necessity have fallen upon them; and so their walking with God in a holy conversation, is a fruit of the mercy already shown, and doth not go before, as a thing by which it should be obtained and procured. They serve God, because they are delivered from wrath, and not because they might receive deliverance from it. It proceeds from joy; in consideration of wrath already past, and not from fear of it to come; so that the wrath of God is preached unto them, not that they are to come under it, or are in that way to fear it, but they may see what they are delivered from; what they did, and should, and others must lie under; that they may see God's love unto them therein, that this may draw them to obedience, and restrain them from sin. And, now they say, because I have been delivered from so great a wrath, therefore will I sing and rejoice, "and walk before the Lord in the land of the living," and triumph in him, who is my deliverer; leading a life answerable to the love of God, bestowing such a deliverance upon me; and so, by this preaching of the wrath of God, as being freed from it, the more one seeth what he is freed from, the more he seeth what Christ hath done in bearing that wrath from him; and consequently, the more he is stirred up to walk before God in more cheerful and comfortable obedience, and the more thankful he will be; and the more he seeth what God hath done for him, the more obedience he seeth he oweth unto him.

And now, if any persons here present, have an evil opinion of the grace of God, as a thing of dangerous consequence, as a licentious doctrine; let them learn from that which hath been said; to mend their minds, and correct their judgments, knowing that the Holy Ghost is of another mind; that

the revealing of the grace of God, is the best way, to take men off from sin; so far is it from letting loose the reins to break out into all manner of sinfulness.