

SERMON IV

CHRIST THE ONLY WAY

Tobias Crisp

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." {Jn.14:6}

The next thing considerable is what kind of way Christ is to the Father. First, as you have heard already, he is a free way; there is not a bar set up against any person in the world, for the way is open; it is a foul delusion of Satan in the heart of any man whatsoever, to say, Christ doth not belong to me; I would fain have Christ, but I may not close with him; let this consideration be ever so plausible, it is a false consideration; for there is no bar in the world, if there be but a heart to step into him. If a man have a mind to step into the king's highway, which is the subject's privilege, no man can say to him, you trespass in so doing; it is made to be common for all; so is Christ a common way to all sorts of persons whatsoever, to whom there is a heart given to step into him. {I Cor.6:11, Acts 6:14}

Some are offended that I should say so; namely, that Christ is a way even to the drunkard, and to the whoremonger; and the vilest sort of persons have as good a right to Christ for their way to the Father, and to apply Christ to themselves, as any. But, be not injurious to the grace of God; be not injurious to yourselves and others; for what saith Christ himself, speaking to those justiciaries, the Pharisees, both devout and blameless men in their lives? Even this, "that publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven, while they are shut out." If we, the ministers of Jesus Christ, should preach that a whore hath right to lay hold upon the kingdom of God in Christ, to lay hold upon Christ for salvation; this would be counted a licentious doctrine. Take heed you cast not dirt into the face of Christ; "Publicans {saith he,} and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven;" I say it, therefore, and say it boldly, the wickedest wretch that stands here at this present time in the presence of God, if the Lord hath but given a heart to that wicked wretch, now at this instant, willingly to close with the Lord Jesus Christ, to take the Lord Jesus Christ for his Christ, though he be now in the vilest condition that ever he was in his life; I say, if he have a real willingness at this instant, to close with the Lord Jesus Christ, it gives him an absolute, complete, and perfect interest in Christ; he is as much his Christ, as the Christ of a saint saved in glory. We are ready to run another strange way; if a man have a little holiness and righteousness, he thinks now that in regard of that holiness and righteousness, he may without presumption close with Christ; but he doth in this overthrow the way of the Gospel. Christ "came to save that which was lost," saith the text; but a person it seems must be found before he be saved. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners;" but a man must be righteous before he have to do with the calling of Christ; see now, whether this be with or against the Gospel. Free grace therefore, even to sinners, is no licentious doctrine, nor doth it a jot maintain the continuance in sin. I say, therefore, Christ belongs to a man that closeth with him, though he be in his sinfulness; Christ indeed washes, cleanses, and adorns a person, when he is clothed withal; but there is none clean, till Christ himself enters, who makes clean where he enters.

I thought good to speak briefly thus much by way of addition to what I have delivered before; did I know the objections of persons against what I delivered, I should gladly endeavour to give satisfaction to them; but observe, you shall find the whole strain of the Gospel run continually thus; "Christ came to save the lost;" "Christ died for the ungodly;" "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" "he received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord might dwell among them;" and such like are the terms of the Gospel, upon which Christ is tendered to our souls. Now; then, I say, to every afflicted soul, art thou rebellious, an enemy, ungodly, a harlot, lost? Nay, art thou worse than enmity

itself? If thou art not worse, Christ came for thee, while thus, though no better; he comes to tender himself unto thee to take him, whilst thou art thus, before thou art any better. Now if this be true, when Christ is reached out unto thy spirit, why art thou so doubtful? Why wilt thou answer, no, I dare not close with him, he belongs not to me? But, suppose Christ should speak from heaven as audibly to thy spirit, as I do to thy ear, and say, "be of good cheer, as vile a sinner as thou art, I am thy Christ;" wouldst thou close with him then? Should that be Gospel indeed? I tell you, Christ cannot, Christ will not speak more from heaven than he doth in his Gospel; if you find he speaks in his Gospel; it is much as if he spake it to your spirits from heaven. It was a delusion of the rich man in the parable, he would have Lazarus go and tell his brethren from him in what torments he was; what saith Abraham? "And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." {Lk.16:31} I say unto you, if you will not hear the voice of the Gospel, neither would you hear the voice of Christ speaking to you, for you would suspect whether it were Christ or no.

Well, but you will say, this is a way to lead men to a licentious course of life. I say the contrary; it is the only way to lead men into a more enlarged way of holiness, than any way in the world, and this I will declare by and by unto you.

We have further considered, that Christ is a safe way; that Christ is a lightsome way; that Christ is a near way; we cannot dwell upon these; for we will go on to make good what I promised to you; the consideration of Christ as a free way, to all comers, is the only way to build men up in a more enlarged course of holiness and righteousness, than all the devices in the world can raise them to. Let me tell you, the rarest self-denial, the frequentest prayer in the world, the greatest study, the most beating down of the body by rigorous fastings; and reckon what other graces you can, they come all short to build up a man in obedience to the will of Christ; they all come short of this one thing, to lay hold upon him as a man is a sinner; and to receive it is an undoubted truth, that Christ is as much my Christ now, as he is the Christ of a saint in heaven. And this will further appear, if we enquire how Christ is such a way, as there is no way, wherein there is a quicker and better riddance of the businesses and employments believers shall have in the world, than in Christ. I will note one thing by the way, before I go on, to make clear this thing, and that is this; it is a received conceit among many persons, that our obedience is the way to heaven; and though it be not, say they, the cause of our reign, yet it is the way to our kingdom.¹

Pardon me; if I give you a hint or two of another thing before I go on; for let me deliver you this position; that there is no believer, under heaven, doth come to heaven before he hath served his generation; there is no man a believer, that hath received Christ, but after he hath received Christ, he is created in him unto good works, that he should walk in them. He that sprinkleth them with clean water, that they become clean from all their filthiness, puts also a new spirit in them, and doth cause them to walk in his statutes and testimonies. He takes away their stony hearts, and gives them hearts of flesh; he writes his Law in their inward parts, and puts his fear into their hearts, that they do not depart from him. So that I say in conclusion, sanctification of life is an inseparable companion, with the justification of a person by the free grace of Christ. But withal, I must tell you, that all this sanctification of life, is not a jot the way of that justified person unto heaven; it is the business a man hath to do in his way, Christ; but it is not the way itself to heaven; if there be no more to clear it but the very text, it is enough; Christ here saith, "I am the way, no man cometh to the Father but by me." Now I ask this question, are our works of sanctification Christ himself, or are they not? If they be

¹ {Note: This is a distinction of Bernard's, which some divines are very fond of; though, I think, he only says, it is the way of the kingdom; so it may be the way or course of those that belong to the kingdom, and yet not be the way to it; obedience and good works are to be performed by all these that are in the way; they lie in the way, and are taken up and done by those that are in it; but they themselves are not the way, but Christ alone; and the learned Hoornbeek observes in his "Summa Controversiarum Religionis;" pg.716, that "the Doctor allows, in some following passages, that sanctification of life is the business a believer has to do in his way Christ; and that good works are concomitant unto heaven to those that shall come thither; and he also enumerates the several ends of doing good works, though not for salvation; which shows, that he was far from being an enemy to good works, or for giving into licentious practices." Gill}

Christ himself, then there are thousands of Christs in the world; if they be not Christ; then there is no coming to the Father by them; because the coming to the Father is by him alone, and by him as he is the sole way.

Now what derogation is there in this unto works, to say, they are not the way to heaven; they are concomitant unto heaven unto persons that shall come thither. The truth is, since redemption is managed by Christ, the Lord hath pointed out other ends and purposes for our obedience, than salvation; salvation is not the end of any good work we do; the ends of our good works are, the manifestation of our obedience and subjection; the setting forth of the praise of the glory of the grace of God; and as it is the setting forth the praise of God's grace, so actual glorifying him in the world; the doing good to others, to be profitable to men; the meeting of the Lord Jesus Christ in them, where he will be found according to the promise; these are the special ends that obedience is ordained for; salvation being settled firm before. All that I will endeavour to build up; is this, to keep the true prerogative of Christ to himself alone and that no righteousness of man entrench upon those privileges that are only his. Take away anything of Christ and give it to any creature, and you deny Christ in part; you destroy the Gospel, the life of which stands in the soleness and oneliness of Christ, from the beginning to the end of our perfection.

Now, to come unto that which I promised; Christ, I say, is such a way unto men, that whosoever chooseth him for their way, by him they come to a quick riddance and dispatch of all the business of holiness and sanctification, which they are to do, while they are in Christ the way; as it is with merchants that go to sea, for it may be the end of their voyage is the Indies; but they have business in France, Holland, Spain, or Turkey, and they put in there; their business is not the way to the end, but it is something they have in the way to do, before they come to their journey's end. All our obedience and righteousness are but so many several businesses here, which we are to dispatch, while we are in our way to Christ, toward heaven; and while Christ is our way, he provides so for us that our business goes on. Now this Christ that we have chosen to be our way is he alone that oils the wheels of our spirits, and puts them into a nimble frame. Therefore, {in I Pet.2:4,5} "to whom coming, {saith the Apostle,} as unto a living Stone, {speaking of Christ,} disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Mark it, I pray you; Christ being a "Living Stone," makes every one that comes to him "living;" for Christ doth not only give life to a person to be active in doing, but he gives liveliness to him to be nimble in activeness; {Ps.119:32;} as we say, such a man is a lively man, when he is quick in his business. The Lord Jesus is as a strong arm that draws a bow; the greater the strength of the arm is, the swifter is the flight of the arrow, and the further the arrow reaches; a weak arm makes the arrow fly slowly, and fall quickly; the Lord Christ being the strength of every soul, he draws the bow with a mighty arm. Do but conceive the more squeamish or sick any man is in his stomach, the more unapt such a person is to labour, for he is soon tired and spent; now from whence proceeds the qualmishness of the stomach? It proceeds from want of spirits, or from weakness of spirits; weakness of life is the occasion of faintness in the stomach. But suppose there be a strong life, strong spirits in men, they are mighty to labour. Such is Christ our way, saith the Apostle, "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory;" "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." Beloved, Christ is life itself; "in him was life, and that life was the light of men." There is no life, like the life of Christ; it is a fountain of life; and all life that is besides, is but the stream of that fountain. If therefore Christ be our life within us, according to the strength of that life, such is the strength of the spirit. A great rooted tree you know, sends up abundance of sap into the branches; whereas a small rooted tree feeds the branches leanly; the larger the root is, the larger the sap, and bigger the growth, and the fuller is the fruitfulness of the tree. Now Christ is a large root of the soul, where he is once received; and as he is such a root, so there are answerable spirits coming from him. Mark what the Apostle saith, though he confesseth of himself, he could do nothing of himself; yet, saith he, "I am able to do all things by Christ that strengthens me;" yea, so able to do all things, that he confesses to the praise of Christ's power, "when I am weak, then I am strong;" as if he had said the stronger my strength is in myself,

the weaker I am to anything; but the less strength there is in me, the more strong am I in Christ; therefore he sends us to Christ for strength; "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." I beseech you, consider, if you would be active persons indeed, you must have it from him in whom all power and activeness consist. You that are poor maid-servants or widows, you do but little in the world, your stock doth not reach far; but if you were married to a rich merchant, or some such great man, you could do much more; because by the marriage of such a man, you are interested into a large stock, and his stock is yours; so closing once with the Lord Christ, the whole stock of Christ is yours; for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and riches, and graces besides; "for it pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell." {Col.1:19} Now, when we have a great stock to trade upon, there may be a great deal of doing; and, for lack of stock, there cannot be so much dealings; so, as there is a fulness of stock in Christ, there may be a fulness of activeness in you; especially, when Christ doth give you, with that stock of life and strength, a faculty of ability, to act that stock; when he gives not only strength, but wisdom to manage such strength unto advantage. {I Chron.29:14, Phil.2:13}

Besides, Christ is such a way, that the business you have to do in the way, shall be done by him exactly, completely, and neatly. There is never a school-master in the world can teach the perfect trade of walking uprightly, but Christ alone; therefore in the New Covenant, you shall find this one of the main clauses, "they shall be all taught of God;" that is, that Christ who is God and man, the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Men are but bunglers that are taught by any other but God. We that are the Ministers of the Gospel leave you dunces in Christianity in matters of practice, until the Lord Jesus Christ come into that ministry, and, by his Spirit, teach your spirits and then when he comes, you shall be exact in skillfulness; "I am wiser than my teachers," saith David; so when Christ comes to teach you, you shall be wise as your school-master. Now if a school-master cannot make true Latin, the scholar will hardly do it; if the scrivener cannot write well, the scholar will make but crow's-claws, as we used to say; therefore learn this truth, if you will be exact in the Christian scholarship, in the mysteries of Christ; go to school to Christ; that is, take Christ for your Christ; wait upon him to instruct you to direct you, to make you skillful; then shall you be infinitely more exact, than by running to any other teacher in the world. Christ, then you see, is such a way, by which we attain to a quicker riddance of all the business we have to do in this way, than any other course besides.

Consider in the next place, as Christ is a way of quick riddance, so he is a sure way, a firm way, a hard way; for there is no fear of sinking while we keep this causeway, this road, as I may call it. Gluts of rain make some clayey, boggy ways, sinking; both cart and man, and all, may stick fast and sink in them; as for Christ, he is a way so rocky, that all the rain that falls upon this way, runs away; it makes it never a jot the more sinking. A man may be as firm, as secure in the greatest storm, as he shall be in the fairest weather. I mean thus, Christ will not deceive; everything in the world else will deceive a man, but Christ will never deceive him. You have observed, sometimes, I know, some places that have been as green and fair to the eye, as the best way that ever men set foot into; but set your foot into them, and you sink up to the neck, they are boggy quagmires. I must tell you, while men make their own righteousness and obedience their way to the Father, they seem to be in a fair and green way which promises firmness; but he that dares to trust himself in the way of his own righteousness to the Father, shall find himself so sinking, that if Christ come not and pluck him out, he shall sink over head and ears. Ye that go to the Father, and think to set yourselves in his presence, and stand in his delight, in the way of your own righteousness, shame and confusion of face will cover you before you are aware. Paul durst not be found in it, but looked upon it as dung; dung you know is sinking; the righteousness of Paul, he saw it, he knew it, it did not only stink in the nostrils of God as dung, but it was a sinking way; he himself could never keep firm footing to go to the Father by it; therefore, he saith, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

{Phil.3:8,9} Let a man venture himself upon Christ, as he is a way to the Father, and he shall not sink. "Fear thou not;" {saith Christ;} "for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." {Is.41:10} "I will uphold thee;" all the righteousness of man is not able to uphold him; nay, there is that in man's righteousness that will sink him; where there is sinfulness in men's actions, in their righteousness; that sinfulness is enough to trip up their heels, to lay them in the dirt, to lay them flat upon their backs that they cannot rise again. {Rom.11:10} Let men come before God with this righteousness, if God find fault with that in which they present themselves, they are gone forever. Let a man keep the whole Law, and at last fail in one point, he is guilty of all. {James 2:10} See then, how firmly he stands, that is built upon a Rock. He that builds upon Christ, builds upon a rock; nothing can shake him; {Mt.7:25;} he transgresses, it is true, but Christ carries away his transgression, that before it comes to the eye of the Father, it is gone into the wilderness. He casts it behind his back, he throws it into the bottom of the sea, it is blotted out, as the text speaks. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." {Isa.44:22} So that still, I say, as water falling upon a rocky way, glides away as fast as it falls, that the way is as hard as before the rain fell, and a man may stand as firm there as before; so all our sinfulness, while we are in the way Christ, as thick as it falls, Christ hath so made himself such a way, that it passeth off from us to him, and from him also. We have garments made now a-days, that if rain falls it will glide off a man, and so not soak into him. Christ is our garment; all the wet that falls upon us, lights on him; it falls from us to Christ himself; that is, all our transgressions, when once we are in Christ, pass from us to him. {Zech.3:3,4, Isa.6:7} Now he hath a garment as well for himself, as for us; that though our sins fall from us to him, yet they remain not upon him. The Lord, indeed, laid the iniquities of all upon Christ; but he passed away all this iniquity from himself, by making full satisfaction to the Father. If Christ should have our sinfulness remaining upon him, when it glides from us, he himself would be a sinking way to us. If Christ were sinful in the eyes of God, we could never be clean in his eyes; it is through his cleanness that we become clean. Now Christ is such a way to believers that receive him, that he took away all their sins from them, bore them all, and left them in his own grave, and raised himself without them. {Heb.9:28} So here is no sin charged upon believers, nor upon Christ; it was laid upon Christ, it is true, but he hath cast it off, and sweat it out; it is evaporated and gone from him too.

Thus you see Christ is a firm way, a secure way, to a person; he shall not stir, he shall not be moved, as long as he keeps Christ to be his way. Once again, as Christ is a firm way to believers, so he is a most pleasant way; I say, a most delightful, a most refreshing and recreating way; Christ is a way, as if it were all strewn with flowers; for there is nothing but mirth and sweetness in him. In Proverbs 3:17, you shall find Christ spoken of under the notion of wisdom, of whom it is affirmed that "her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" not only pleasant ways, but ways of pleasantness; as if there were nothing but pleasures; as if the ways were substantial pleasures or full of all manner of delight. Do but observe a notable expression in Isaiah 35:1,2, where the prophet speaks as if he had been an Apostle in the time, or after the time of Christ; you may see, by him, what a pleasant way Christ is to all those that choose him for their way; in the 1st verse, you have him expressing himself thus, "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose;" he means thus, that whereas men lived as in the wilderness and in a desert place; that is, in a sad and solitary condition; they shall be translated into such a way, into such a pleasant way, that there shall be gladness and rejoicing; there shall be the blossom of roses in this way. And to illustrate the pleasantness of the way into which Christ translates his, by translating them into himself, he goes on in the 2nd verse, "it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God;" nothing but pleasure; it is compared to Lebanon, the sweetest place in the world; to Carmel and Sharon, places of great delight; such shall be the way chalked out and held forth unto believers. Look into the last verse of the chapter, and see what a way of pleasure Christ is unto all those that receive him; "and the

ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Behold the mirth that is in the way, Christ! There is nothing but joy and gladness.

But some will say that believers find it otherwise; there is not such joy and gladness, but they are often oppressed with sadness and heaviness of spirit. I answer, there is not one fit of sadness in any believer whatsoever, but he is out of the way Christ.² I mean, in fits of sadness in respect of his jealousy of his present and future estate; he is out of the way of Christ, he enjoys not him as he ought, while he is in such fits. Therefore, the Apostle puts believers upon rejoicing always. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice." {Phil.4:4} There is matter of nothing but joy in him; while there is mourning in believers, there are meltings in those mournings; and more joy in the mourning of a believer, than in all the mirth of a wicked man. I appeal to you, that have had melted hearts, whether you have not found a secret content in your meltings, that you rather fear the change of that mourning, than that you are troubled with it?

That which is a most common proverb in the world is most certainly true in this present case, "some men for joy do weep, others for sorrow sing." I say, believers weep for joy, and never mourn more kindly than when they see the joy of the Holy Ghost, in the freeness and fulness of the Lord Christ, poured out upon them; there is never any more kindly mourning for sin, than that mourning, when the soul is satisfied of the forgiveness of sins; I say, the soul is first satisfied with forgiveness of sins, before there is that real kindly mourning in those that are believers. You have heard of some persons, I know, that have been condemned to be executed, who at the scaffold have been so obdurate and stiff-necked, that not a cry, not a tear came from them; yet, just when their necks went to the block, upon the coming of the pardon, when they were discharged, they that could not weep a tear, nor be affected with their estate, no sooner, do they see a pardon, and themselves acquitted, but they melt all into tears; so it is with believers, the more they see Christ in the pardon of sin and the love of God in Christ to receive and embrace them, the more they melt. Therefore, Solomon hath a notable expression; "if thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee." {Pv.25:21,22} As much as if he should have said, kindness is the best way in the world to melt the most obdurate wretch. Thus God deals with men through Christ; he gives them bread when they are hungry, and drink when they are thirsty; and thus he heaps coals of fire upon their heads; that is, he melts them.

So, you see, what an admirable way Christ is, all full of pleasure; there is the Spirit of Christ to make music unto a soul. "Speak comfortably unto my people," saith God; and this is the Office of the Spirit, and the Spirit doth nothing else but speak comfortable things. Christ is a way, as the cellars of wine are unto drunkards, that are never better than when they are at the cup; and, therefore, no place like the cellar, where there is fulness of wine always to be tipping and drinking; I say, Christ is such a way; and let it not be offensive to say so, for the church speaks in the same language. "He brought me to the banqueting house, {into his wine-cellar,} and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." {Cant.2:4,5} Christ hath such a variety of delicacies served in continually, and such sweetness in this variety, that the soul is no longer satisfied than it is with Christ. Here is not staying with cups, much less with half cups, but staying with whole flagons; there is a kind of inebriating, whereby Christ doth, in a spiritual sense, make believers, that keep him company, spiritually drunk; he overcomes them with wine. "And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." {Is.25:6} Here is abundance, it is a feast, and "a feast of fat things" full of marrow, which is the best of fatness; a feast "of wine well refined upon the lees," pure and clarified wines; this is the entertainment Christ hath for those that keep him company. The Psalmist, in Psalm 36:7,8, hath an excellent expression to this purpose, {speaking of the

² {Note: That is, as to the enjoyment of him, as it is afterwards explained; or with respect to the exercise of faith, or comfortable walking in the way, Christ, as becomes a believer; otherwise he that is once in Christ is always so; he can never be out of him, as to interest in him, and salvation by him. Gill}

excellency of Christ,} saith he, "how excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings." Well, what follows, when they put their trust under the shadow of his wings; that is, when they shall make choice of him to be their way; "they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." Mark, "of thine pleasures," for {saith he} with thee is the well of life. {Jn.4:14} Here are not only pleasures, but rivers of pleasures; here is not only life, but a well of life; such dainties and delicacies, such curiosities and rarities, as the world can never know, nor see, nor taste. We read in the Book of Revelation of "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." {Rev.2:17} This I am sure of, there are delights in Christ, none can possibly reach unto, but those to whom Christ doth give himself, and those that receive him; therefore, in Matthew 11:25, our Saviour thanks his Father thus; "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." And it is worth observing, he doth not thank him, that he hath revealed them to the mighty, great and wise, that abound in all the manner of abilities far above others, but "unto babes;" there is much in that phrase; for a babe is the weakest of all sorts of men; implying thus much, that the weakest of all believers, in the body of Christ; as I may say, the feeblest babe, shall partake of such hidden things, such excellencies of Christ, that all the world shall never be able to dive into, reach, nor comprehend; and Christ himself takes such delight in their societies, that he takes occasion to bless God, the Father, that he is so large for his sake, to do so much for them, above what he did for others. So ye see, Christ is also a pleasant way, a way of exceeding great content and delight. There is yet one thing more.

Christ is a way of all the ways in the world the most easy to be hit; there is no difficulty to find it out, nor to find out a progress in it. Many ways may lead unto a comfortable end; but there are so many cross ways to turn men out, that they lose themselves. In the way of works a man may presently lose himself; there is not one work he doth, but he commits sin in it, and so he presently steps aside, and loses himself, and must begin again, and go about, and come where he was at first. God will never let any soul come near unto him that comes to him with any sin whatsoever. If there be any one sin, all must be undone, and a man must begin again, as they say. I speak this of the righteousness of man, while he makes that his way to God. Therefore Christ is the way; there is no stepping aside in Christ, no losing of him. There cannot be an error committed, which when a man comes to the Father by Christ, shall be taken notice of, as an error from that person; so, I say, it is the easiest way in the world to be hit. It is true what Peter saith of Paul, "many things in his writings are very hard to be understood;" but mark, in the Gospel, things that do pertain unto the justification of a sinner, are written in such great and plain letters, that he that runs may read them. Do but observe a few expressions, which show how easy it is to hit the way, Christ himself being the way. In Isaiah 35:8, the prophet speaks of a highway that "shall be, and the wayfaring men; though fools, shall not err therein." The Psalmist tells us, that "the commandments of God give light unto the eyes;" and the Gospel without question makes the simple wise; there are some things you know, that you are able to teach fools; though you are not able to teach them deep mysteries. Beloved, Christ the way to salvation, makes himself so plain to those that come unto him, that though they be very fools, yet they shall not mistake, nor err; nay, though fools and wayfaring men. A wise man, if he be a wayfaring man, that is, a stranger, may miss his way; but if a man be a stranger, and a fool too, it must be a very easy way that he hits. A fool may hit a way in which he hath long conversed, which strangers may easily miss; but, saith the Holy Ghost, the way that Christ is made to men, is such a way, that "fools, though wayfaring men, shall not err therein."

Again, Christ is the way, and such a way, as is a spacious, large, elbow-room way, as I may so say; there is abundance of largeness and elbow-room in Christ the way to the Father; therefore Christ himself saith, "if the Son make you free, then are you free indeed." When Christ comes to bring liberty to men, then they are at liberty indeed; therefore, it is said, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." {Gal.5:1}

When a man enters into Christ, he enters into liberty and freedom; there is a contracted bondage in every way and condition but Christ alone.

But some will say, how do you answer that place in Matthew 7:14? "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." How can Christ be such a way of liberty, when the way is said to be an exceeding straight and narrow way? I answer, first mark the words that go before, where Christ speaks not this simply, but comparatively; the way is straight and narrow in comparison of that which he speaks of; for the words before are, "broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;" then he comes in afterwards with these; "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life;" that is, in comparison of the vast liberty and scope the world takes to walk in, and the vast rangings of their vain hearts, it is a strait way; but, simply considering Christ in himself, he is a large way; large in respect of the number that go in it, and in respect of the elbow-room therein. In a narrow way, few can go abreast, it will hold but a few men; but, in open broad ways, many may go together. Mark now, how Christ is a large and spacious way; "and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." {I Jn.2:2} See what a spaciousness there is in Christ, that the whole world, the multitude of people of all sorts in the world, may have elbow-room in this way.³

But, secondly, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way." What is this straightness? To this question perhaps you will answer, a strict, austere and severe life; a preciseness and exactness without giving to a man's self any liberty whatsoever; this is the straitness of the way that leadeth unto life. But give me leave to add, I confess the stricter Christians can walk the better; and Christ will more and more confine the life of a believer unto a holy exactness; but, under favour, I conceive, this is not the meaning of the text here, that by the straitness of the way is meant strictness of conversation; but rather the meaning is, "strait is the gate and narrow is the way;" that is, it hath not that latitude in it, that generally men think it hath. What is that? Men generally think, that besides Christ, there is something more in the way that leadeth to life, and that is a man's own righteousness; not only Christ, but a man's own righteousness jointly together with Christ; these are the way to salvation; this is the conceit of many men; but I say, it is straight and narrow, in this regard, that all a man's own righteousness must be cut out of the way; it must be so narrow, that there must be nothing in the way, but Christ; when a man's own righteousness is taken into the way, besides Christ, then it is a broader way than Christ allows of; he allows only that way to himself.⁴ And that this is the

³ {Note: The design of the Apostle in these words is to comfort his little children with the advocacy and propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, who might fall into sin, through weakness and inadvertency; but what comfort would it yield to a distressed mind, to be told that Christ was a propitiation, not only for the sins of the apostles and other saints, but for the sins of every individual in the world, even of those that are in hell? Would it not be natural for persons in such circumstances, to argue rather against, than for themselves, and conclude, that seeing persons might be damned notwithstanding the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, that this might and would be the case. In the writings of the Apostle John, the word 'world' admits of a variety of senses; and therefore the sense of it in one place cannot be the rule for the interpretation of it in another; which can only be fixed as the text or context determine; sometimes it signifies the whole universe of created beings; {Jn.1:10;} sometimes the habitable earth; {Jn.16:28;} sometimes the inhabitants of it; {Jn.1:10;} sometimes unconverted persons, both elect and reprobate, {Jn.15:19;} sometimes the worse part of the world, the wicked; {Jn.17:9;} sometimes the better part, the elect; {Jn.1:29, 6:33,51;} sometimes a number of persons, and that a small one in comparison of the rest of mankind; {Jn.12:19;} in one place it is used three times, and in so many senses; {Jn.1:10;} he; that is, Christ "was in the world," the habitable earth, and "the world," the whole universe, "was made by him;" and "the world," the inhabitants of the earth, "knew him not;" and which is not to be understood of them all; for there were some, though few, who did know him; and I will venture to affirm, that the word 'world' is always used in the Apostle John's writings in a restrictive and limited sense, for some only; unless when it designs the whole universe, or habitable earth, senses which are out of the question; for none will say Christ died for the sun, moon, and stars, for fishes, fowls, brutes, sticks, and stones; and that it is never used to signify every individual of mankind that has been, is, or shall be, in the world; in which sense it ought to be proved it is used, if any argument can be concluded from it in favour of general redemption. Gill.}

⁴ {Note: Mr. Anthony Burgess, in his "Vindiciae Legis," pg.32, finds great fault with the Doctor's sense of Matt.7:13,14, applying the words to Christ, which he represents as a forced interpretation of them; whereas nothing is more easy and natural, for, as Christ elsewhere calls himself a door, and a way, Jn.10:9 and 16:6, why not here a gate and a way? Moreover, if anything besides Christ is here meant, there must be more ways than one to heaven, and Christ could not be the only way; for certain it is, that the way here spoken of leads to eternal life,

meaning, seems to me by the words that follow; "Beware" {saith Christ in the next words,} "of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves;" it seems, in this Christ gives a warning, how to beware of false prophets, by telling men, "that strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life." And what false prophets were they? If you consult with Luke, {Acts 15:1-24,} you shall understand who these false prophets were, and withal, the meaning of this text; for there you shall find that these false prophets were they that troubled the church, and occasioned that assembly, the first council that ever was; some {say the council} that "went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law," {vs.24,} or else you cannot be saved. These are the false prophets Christ meant, that would make the observation of the Law of Moses and Circumcision to be co-partners with Christ, as a way to salvation; to whom say the Apostles, "we gave no such commandment." You shall find that in the Epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, all the Apostle's contests were with such "false prophets that came in sheep's clothing;" they were not false prophets that came in wolves' habits, that are openly profane and scandalous; for these can deceive no man, as they show themselves to all; but they are "false prophets in sheep's clothing;" that is, they seem to be sheep, they seem to be austere; they seem to preach nothing but righteousness and holiness; but yet they are ravenous wolves. How so? They make men build upon their own righteousness, and not upon Christ, and so destroy poor souls; these are those the Apostle bids us beware of. "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish; having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" {Gal.3:1-3} Thus he argues against the false prophets that will establish the righteousness of man as the way to life.

In a word or two, there are two things more considerable, I will but touch them; Christ is a shady way; in hot weather, men much desire shady places; you know the case of Jonah, when he was scorched with heat, God provided for him a gourd, and how comfortable was it upon him? Christ is a shady way. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over-past;" saith Christ. {Isa.26:20} When the scorching glooms of God's wrath break out into the world, Jesus Christ is a hiding-place, "until the indignation be over-past."

Again, Christ is a quiet way. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." {Is.32:17} There are some private ways men affect, because there is but little disturbance; but in some other ways, especially in some common roadways, there is nothing but quarrelling and reveling; but Christ, he is a quiet way; all is peace while you are in Christ. "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." {Rom.15:13} Believe, and there is all peace for you; "being justified," that is, while you are in Christ to justify you, there is "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" {Rom.5:1;} and nothing but peace. I see the time is past; something else I should have considered, especially the ground why Christ is such a way, but I shall rather break off abruptly.

for nothing else can be meant by life; and as to what this writer says, that then by the opposition, not wickedness, but the devil himself would be the broad way; it may be replied, that not the devil only is opposed to Christ, but everything that is wicked, yea that has the appearance of good, but is not really so; and the broad way may very well be thought to take in the devil, and all his lusts, which men will do, and walk in; and not only open vice and profaneness, but all the false guises of religion and holiness, and a man's own polluted and pharisaical righteousness, to which Christ and his righteousness stand opposed. Matt.5:20. Gill}