

SERMON XLIII

THE BLESSEDNESS OF BELIEVING WITHOUT SIGHT

Tobias Crisp

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." {John 20:29}

Our blessed Saviour out of tender pity to man; man so sunk in his own filth, and stuck so fast, that he could not possibly crawl out; undertook his recovery, by making his soul an offering for sin, "that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Now, because a necessity lay upon him to compass this work of redemption in so ignominious a way, as by the cursed death of the cross, which was likely {as he knew} to prove a sore stumbling block of offence to the little faith of his disciples; therefore, whilst he remained with them, his great care was to remove it out of the way before hand, by declaring the expediency, nay, the necessity of such humiliation; by working such strange miracles as might fully satisfy them of his all-sufficiency; especially those latter miracles of restoring sight to the man born blind, and raising Lazarus after he had been four days dead; and by declaring his raising up of himself again the third day after his death, of which his miracle on Lazarus was a sufficient evidence; he having been dead four days, when himself would lie dead but till the third. All which arguments were little enough, it seems, to keep their faith from tottering, being assaulted by the principles of sense and natural reason; for the faith of them all reeled, none of them stood fast, until Christ, through condescension to their weakness, settled them again with the crutch of sense; appearing again unto them, and manifesting himself to be risen. It was the lot of Thomas, being before absent from his fellows, to be last in believing; not so much because his faith was weaker than theirs, but because it was not his portion to see him when they did; for when the women told the eleven that Christ was risen, before they saw him, Luke tells us, that the words of the women "seemed to them as idle tales," and so they believed them not; therefore, although Christ immediately before my text, upbraids the weak faith of Thomas in particular, yet hath a secret fling at the weakness of the faith of them all who staggered until they had seen him; so that although he did bear with, and overlook the present weakness, yet here he acquaints them and us, what is the best and most blessed faith, namely, a believing without sight.

This text, for the kind of it, is doctrinal, sweetly mixed with consolatory matter; the doctrinal part unfolds the proper way and working of faith, namely, to believe without sight. The ingredient of consolation mixed herewith is the richest cordial a soul can take, namely, blessedness to all that so believe. We will not alter this receipt of Christ, but give it you as himself hath made it; only that you may the better be induced to take it {because the outward hue of it doth not promise the sweetness it contains, it seeming to a careless natural eye a very paradox} we will, therefore read you a brief lecture on the most material particulars therein contained, for your better satisfaction in what is hidden, and not clear enough to common apprehensions. Two things here are of most moment to be considered; what it is to believe, when and where there is no sight; and wherein such believing makes a man blessed.

For the clearing of the first note, that there is a three-fold sight mentioned in the scripture. 1. Corporeal. 2. Rational. 3. Spiritual; all very pragmatic, and ready to thrust their oars into faith's boat, though they endanger the sinking of or the putting it farther from shore; for faith rows backward to get forward, as boat-men; when these will be rowing with the face forward, thinking faith's way madness.

1. The corporeal sight is taken sometimes properly, for the natural operations of the bodily eye; sometimes synecdochically, for the exercise of all, or any of the senses, such as hearing, feeling, and the rest. We need go no further than the text and coherence, to know that sight in the latter and

larger sense is not only used in scripture, but also intended in this place to be sequestered from believing. Thomas will not believe, except he see the print of the nails in Christ's hands, and thrust his hands into his sides; which exceptions, when granted him, both in seeing and touching him, he puts both into the word seen, "because thou hast seen, thou hast believed, blessed, &c." But for further clearing hereof, you must note, that although this sight and touching of Christ's body risen, be principally here intended, by reason of the occasion offered from Thomas's unbelief, yet our Saviour intended his speech should extend further, to all natural sense in any other cases; for he speaks not so restrictively in the text, as to limit it only to the present occasion; then he should have added to seen, {me or my body,} and should have mentioned Thomas only here, and not said blessed is he in general, which includes all believers. It is therefore to be understood, that the corporeal sight here intended to be sequestered from a blessed believing, implies all such visible and palpable natural things, which men are naturally apt to fly unto, and rest on, to keep them from staggering at Christ's promises especially, without which their faith is very wavering.

For the further clearing of our Saviour's intent, about the mixing of natural sense with faith to support it, I will illustrate it in two sorts of instances; in personal cases, and in cases that concern the church in general.

That which Christ aims at in personal cases is, when we find any promises of the good we desire or want, he would not have us judge of the likelihood or unlikelihood of their accomplishment, by the probability or improbability of concurring sensible means. For example, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee;" when wind and tide are all with us, when outward things are all flowing towards us, we suspect not, nor are anxiously disquieted with doubts or scruples of miscarriage, but believe; but when God takes away these sensible crutches, and leaves nothing in the eye but his promises, we are presently troubled; a thousand objections then arise, and makes us reel to and fro like a drunken man, and we are even at our wit's end. It was David's weakness, for whilst he knew of any holes or holds of safety to secure him from Saul, he staggers not at the promise of the kingdom; but when Saul had hunted him out of all, then his faith reels, and, as he confesseth, "he said in his haste, that all men were liars," even Samuel himself. And again, in his staggering, he cries out, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." Examples are infinite of this kind; such are, Moses in the matter of food in the wilderness, and fetching water out of a rock; the prince on whom the king leaned when the famine was in Samaria, and the prophet foretold a sudden plenty; and the disciples about the few loaves and fishes for the feeding so many thousands. Now our Saviour in this place and case would have our faith abstracted from these sensible means, and not lean a jot to them, but settle on the promise alone as its sole bottom; yet not as if we should wholly neglect the use of such means as he puts into our hands, but faith must not lean to them as a lame man on a crutch.

For the church in general, Christ promises, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;" and that "no weapon formed against it shall prosper." Here he would not have our faith consult with sensible probabilities or improbabilities, for quieting or satisfying of us in the truth and accomplishment of these promises. For example, whilst a church, or this our church, hath the concurrent hands and voices of great patrons to support or raise it, and we see their activity, wisdom, and power, working that way, we conclude, with a settled security, that it shall "stand fast like mount Zion," and shall mount up; but if the tide turns, or storms arise, her great patrons withdraw, or are scattered by might, and great politicians lay siege against her, when hopeful means are dashed, and former likelihods come to nothing; then for all the promises we hang the lip, and grow desperate; this is to join sense to faith, which our Saviour here would have separated from it, intending that the failing and disappointing of such and such sensible means, shall not a jot alter our confidence in the promises, or cause us to be the more jealous of them. A notable illustration of this you have in God's people, Ezek.37:1-11, who seemed to themselves as dry bones, because they saw no refuge to fly to; therefore he shows a notable vision of dry bones, raised to a mighty active army; intimating that God's promises to his church, are never put to straits by the greatest natural impossibilities, and that therefore our faith should not be brought to so uneven, deceitful, and rusty a beam.

2. As natural sense, so natural reason is to be sequestered from believing; where, let us consider; what the sight of natural reason is; {for that there is such an eye I need not stay to prove;} and, what it is to sequester it from believing; for the former, it is in general no more but a certain evidence of the truth of things, and of their coming to pass, so far only as by natural principles, and dependence of effects on their causes that the discourse of reason can demonstrate and infer. For the clearer illustration of this, {because it is very common to call this natural reason to counsel, whereon we are apt to rely much for the certainty of things to be believed,} know more particularly, that a man is said to see things by natural reason, when knowing what effects natural causes will produce, and what not, he concludes of such effects accordingly. For instance, a man by rational sight knowing that fire naturally burns, but cannot cool a thing; hence he concludes certainly, that such or such a thing cast into the fire must needs be burnt. So also knowing that lesser might is overtopped by greater, certainly concludes that the weakest must needs go to the wall. Now further consider, that where reason cannot find or pry into the adequateness of a cause, to produce such or such an effect, let who as will affirm, it shall be produced, it will not be embraced. In brief, such an adhering unto the evidence of things only as reason can make by its natural discourse, rejecting all things else, at least as doubtful, which it cannot dive into, this is properly a rational sight.

This will be more clear in considering what it is to sequester rational sight from believing; for clearing whereof, you must not conceive that a man must be an unreasonable creature, or cease to be reasonable when he believes; there is a necessary use of reason in believing, insomuch as creatures without that are not capable of it. It would not therefore be amiss, to understand what sight of reason is necessary, and what must be separated. Note, that inferring conclusions from adequate causes known, which is the special work of reason, is necessary unto faith; for example, when God saith, "I blot out your transgressions for mine own sake;" it is impossible to believe this without the use of reason. For the thing must be understood by an intellectual faculty; natural idiots cannot believe. 2. There must be some ground or reason of believing it, something that must draw the soul to be persuaded of it; namely, because God speaks it, who is able to make it good, and the Spirit by the word persuades, that it is he that speaks it, and that he is able, faithful, and true. The apostle tells us, that "we must be able to give a reason of our hope," or faith; therefore we must have reason for it. You will then say, what sight of reason must be separated from believing? I answer, whereas natural reason judges and concludes of events according to the efficacy, or inefficacy of natural causes, as if a thing could not come to pass except the womb of nature could afford it; this principle must be denied in believing divine truths, and an infinite efficacy must be allowed to an infinite supernatural cause; God himself being infinitely beyond all natural causes; the truth is, that the judgment of natural reason about heavenly things, from the efficacy of natural things, secluding supernatural, is worse than a blind man's judging of colors, which although he see not himself, yet he is apt to judge as seeing men do; whereas natural reason is peremptory, and will not yield one jot beyond its dim sight. You may observe it an ordinary thing, when God makes promises of greater things than nature produces, then natural reason is called to consult and deliberate, nay, to give its vote to such promises; as in those cases of Moses before mentioned; "Ye rebels, must I fetch water out of a rock?" He consults with the rock, what efficacy it had to give water, and so staggered; and with the barren wilderness, what it had to afford food; they pleading impossibility, his faith staggers, which lost him the temporal Canaan. See it in Sarah, consulting with her old age, and the deadness of her womb, whether nature could produce the promised seed from them; which they denying, she laughs at it. Nicodemus also, about the mystery of regeneration, reasons with nature, whether it could receive a man, being old, into his mother's womb again, and so, instead of believing, cries out, "how can these things be?" And the disciples consult with death and the grave, whether they could send their guests away alive again, as Thomas here did, so believes not the resurrection of Christ. On the other side, see how Abraham sequesters the sight of reason from his faith in the promised seed; "he considered not his own body being dead, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb;" that is, he stopped his ears, and would not hear the reasons nature would suggest of the impossibility of the thing. So the three children would not hear, nor mind what the nature of fire could say to deter them, but stick to this,

"our God is able, and will deliver us," let fire, say what it can. Now the faith which Christ commends here, is such as must be abstracted, both from the encouragements and discouragements which natural discourse of reason can suggest; that is, it must neither lean nor venture any weight on the one, or be startled or unsettled by the other; but without regarding either, stand fast on its own bottom only, to wit, the self-sufficient authority of divine truth, never asking, no, nor yet regarding how likely, or unlikely, it is to reason that such a truth should come to pass.

There is also a spiritual seeing of things mentioned often in the scripture. Now, the question is, whether this spiritual sight must be abstracted from believing? For the full answer hereof you must first distinguish of spiritual sight as before of the bodily. It is used oftentimes strictly, for a sanctified understanding, knowledge, spiritual discerning God's revealing unto, and acquainting the soul with the secrets of his divine mysteries, according to that prayer of David, "open thou mine eyes, that I may behold the wondrous things of thy law." Likewise, it is taken sometimes more largely, for spiritual sense, or experimental feeling of God's comfortable presence and power, according to that of the psalmist, "taste, and see how good the Lord is." So likewise are those passages of God's "lifting up of the light of his countenance," and "showing his face," to be understood of a spiritual sense, or experimental perception of God's love, yet expressed by "seeing his face." Now, to resolve the question, I answer, that the former, to wit, a spiritual understanding, or insight into the mysteries of the gospel, is absolutely essential to believing, without which it hath no subsistence; for, without knowledge the heart is not good; and therefore cannot be a believing heart, from whence it obtains that denomination of goodness. Therefore it is, that knowledge is sometimes spoken of in scripture instead of believing; "this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Whereas salvation comes by faith; men must hear, and by hearing must understand before they can believe; so Paul tells us, that "faith comes by hearing." This single eye is that which makes the whole body of faith full of light; whereas, if this be dark, that must be full of darkness. A blind faith led by a blind man must needs throw the man, {blind in both these eyes,} into the ditch. But this sight must not be in the basis of faith, but the thing known; else we fetch the rise of faith from within ourselves.

As for the other branch of spiritual sight, namely, experimental spiritual sense, I shall desire you to mark the resolution of this exactly, which that I may perform the more clearly, I shall endeavour to show you. What this experimental spiritual sense is; and how far it must be shut up, and not regarded in the act of believing. For spiritual experimental sense, you are to consider it present or absent. Spiritual sense present, is an actual feeling within one's self, God kissing and embracing the soul, and that sensibly satisfied and refreshed with actual joy and solace therewith; a feeling the virtue and power of the gracious promises of the gospel actually diffused into the soul, and their energetical or powerful workings, together with the several graces of the Spirit, sensibly flourishing as green bay-trees, sending forth continually plentiful, large, and beautiful fruits; so that the stomach is not more sensible of the comforts and repairs by meat eaten with an hungry appetite, than the soul is with the digested bread of life. For example, when a person feels the enlarged workings of the spirit of mourning, prayer, and mortification, so that by them it mounts as with the wings of an eagle, it runs and is not weary; this, and such like, is a present experimental spiritual sense; when all this, and the like, is absent from the soul, so that God stands afar off, seems to thrust away, and will not give a good look, the promises seem to fail; as David complains, as if they were like a spring in drought, quite dried up, or a dry breast, that not a drop of sweetness will come, suck the soul as hard as it can, in regard of the exercise of grace, the soul seems as a channel from whence the feeding spring is diverted, all dry; or as a tree in the winter, so naked, as that it seems dead; tears and prayers are dried up, mortification and self-denial are of leaden heels, and the soul seems as bound hand and foot; this, and the like, is a case wherein spiritual sight, or sense, is absent.

Now, to come home to both these conditions of spiritual sense and senselessness; I say, where God is pleased to give the present operative virtue thereof, it should be cherished with all joy and thankfulness, as being a taste of heaven, and a comfortable means of an abundant glorifying of God. Yet, I say, it is very dangerous to faith to lean on this spiritual sense for the certainty and

stability of promises which concern future time. My meaning is; if such a one, thus possessed of spiritual sense, look upon promises for further good, and to be quietly settled about the due accomplishment of them, shall build on his present experiences, and not mind a sure foundation of the settling of the spirit; nay, if he set but one foot on this experience to rest his faith on, he shall totter sooner than he is aware, though the other foot be on the firm ground of God's truth and faithfulness. It is with such a one, as with a man that hath one foot on firm ground, and the other on a loose, or floating board; when that slips or falls, he will hardly stand fast, how firm soever the other foot stands. Who knows not the ebbings, as well as flowings of spiritual present experiences, the risings and settings of them? Let David speak for all; one while his heart is ravished and enlarged, it is full sea with him, as his spiritual sails are filled; by and by his sun is set, his channel is dry, the wind is turned into the teeth of him, {as I may say,} and he is roaring and crying out of God's forsaking him. You that have been wrapped up with him, have you not been in the bottom with him too? Hath not it been April weather with you, now a fair sunshine, anon a great storm tails, and this with a frequent vicissitude? Now, can that be good ground for any part of a foundation to be laid, that is so sinking? Suppose the most of the building of your confidence be on the rock, God's faithfulness and power; yet if but one corner be built on this experience that will give way, will it not endanger the drawing of the whole confidence at least aside? You will say, may I not gather confidence from former experience? No, not from the experience itself, but God's manifesting his faithfulness in fulfilling former promises. You will say, I do no otherwise; I answer, there are many who think they do no otherwise, yet do; for if God's faithfulness were the settlement of thy faith, in thy full tide of experience, and not the sense itself, how is it that he no sooner hides his face, but thou art troubled, and thy faith is tottered? Hast thou no more questioned or staggered at promises, being down, than when thou wert up? If so, why is it thus? Were the whole building of thy faith on the rock only, {that changeth not with the change of thy sense,} there would be no more cause of doubt, or suspicion, than there was before. The true cause indeed is that too much weight was ventured on that thawing ice.

Beloved, you had need be wise, even you that are in Christ's wine-cellar, now stayed with his flagons, and comforted with his apples; for if you depend too much on these love-tokens, and judge of love by the flowings in of them; God seeing himself robbed of the dependence due to him, may on purpose withhold, that you may learn not to trust on the uncertain experiences, but on the living God; and it may be, if you be not wary, it must cost you dearer than you would; the wisest may happily learn some wisdom; I doubt not, but that Christ who gives light, will guide by his Spirit into the needful truths he teacheth.

So I come to the second thing considerable about spiritual sense; namely, the absence of those spiritual experiences before mentioned. Here many a fearful soul is a most bitter advocate against itself; nay, and a misled judge too. When spiritual experiences fail, and their flourishing sappiness is sunk out of view, they do not only plead against believing promises, and urge vehemently what may be objected, but proceed to a fearful sentence, that it is presumption to depend on the promises, as long as it is so bad with them, and that they belong not to them, because they are at so low an ebb in spirituals. Before I enter on the clearing of this know, that it is far from my purpose to justify any defects in grace, or to rock any asleep in a naked condition; but rather by this discourse to set them in the right way. I say, it is not only no presumption, but the blessed faith which our Saviour and the Holy Ghost everywhere commend, to believe in Christ, and apply the promises to themselves as their own; even when spiritual experiences are vanished quite out of sight or sense. For example, such a one, for the present hath not sweet tastes, or sensible embraces of God's love, but rather the contrary, feeling the arrows of the Almighty sticking fast in him, and the like; I say, for such a one in this case to believe God to be his God, is a blessed faith. This seems at first a very paradox; but stay a while, and I shall make it a manifest truth, both by scripture, example, and precept. You know Job's case, what a terror God was to him, how {at least as he thought} God took him for an enemy, and wrote bitter things against him, making him to possess the sins of his youth. He was as low as man could lie, in regard of God's sensible favour being hid from him; yet as low as he was, his faith was not dashed herewith; for "though he kill me, yet will I trust in him," saith he; and his meaning is,

though these terrors of the Almighty exhaust his soul, so that he die without the sense of God's favour, yet he will trust still. Dare any say that this was presumption in him? Nay, that it was not an heroical act of faith? And why mayest thou not say, and do as well as he? There can nothing of moment be objected against this instance that I know. I will name but one more without all exception. You know how Christ himself complains, that God hath forsaken him; yet even then he saith, "My God, my God." If you say, these are rare examples, not to be reached, {although that be not true,} see God's charge to believe even in this case; "who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." {Is.50:10}

But many are apt to think, if I were sure he was my God, I might trust in him without sense. Now though this is a very common objection, yet who sees not the vanity of it? What is it to be sure, but to have the sense of his favour? Now the case we have in hand, supposes this sense removed and gone, and no appearance of it; so that the objection is but this, if I had sense, I might believe without it, which is either nonsense, or a contradiction. But it will be further objected, that if men must believe that have no experience, then wicked and unregenerate persons may believe the promises. I answer, that whilst they are such, they neither will, nor care to believe them one with another; indeed, they cannot believe them, {whilst such,} for it is not yet given them to believe or mind them. But, I answer, that wicked men may, if they can, believe the promises before they have experience; nay, I say further, that no man shall ever have experiences, until he believe without experiences. Doth not God justify the ungodly, even whilst he is so? Doth he not find him so, and at that time cast his love on him? It God doth so, what impropriety or incongruity is it to believe he doth so? You will say this is at first conversion; but I answer, is not God's love as free afterwards to rise anew after some setting? Doth not God return for his own name sake only? And if he does, must not our faith be on that name only? The truth is, man's nature is apt to look after some loveliness or beauty in himself to win God, and therefore, when he can find no such thing, he is out of heart. This popery is natural, the fine-spun distinctions to evade it are mere fig-leaves, not able to cover the nakedness of it; he that comes to God and his promises with a blind-folded faith, {I mean a faith that takes notice of nothing in himself whether good or evil,} is God's most welcome guest.

But some will say, they look not after anything of their own, but God's work in them; this they would find; but I would know, to what purpose? If to rejoice therein, or to glorify God thereby, it is good, but nothing to this purpose of believing in Christ and his promises; for if you would find them for encouragement to believe, know that God's way is the nearest way to believe, whatever you think of any other; his way is for faith to go alone, and not with such crutches; for the Lord knows that they hinder the pace of faith, and often lay it in the dirt. Know that you must not be your own carvers. Thomas thought it a far easier way to believe Christ to be risen, by seeing him, than by running to the promises without sight of him; and we all naturally follow him the same way, it being the readier way to our poring hearts; but Christ saith in my text, the other is the right and blessed way. You will further object, if want of spiritual experience may not keep men off from believing, then a man may live as he list, and yet believe the promises. This indeed is a great objection, which I doubt too many make too much use of to their own destruction. For the more full answering of it, therefore know, that neither Christ nor his promises must be divided, for men to pick and choose what they list, and leave the rest; men must take him and them one with another. I know licentious persons would be glad of salvation from wrath by Christ, and of temporal good; and they are apt to assume a liberty from this point, that their faith is good, and the promises shall be performed to them, though they have no goodness; but have they any heart to believe other promises as well as these, those of mortification of sin, and holiness of life, that God in the attendance on his ordinances will subdue their iniquities, and cause them to walk in his testimonies? These are no bits for their palate. Now they that truly believe, having no spiritual sense, embrace all sorts of promises, and as eagerly pursue mortification and holiness promised, as deliverance from wrath; they would as gladly have Christ to reign in and over them, as to blot out their transgressions. The text imports so much in the generality of the expression, not believing some few culled things out of Christ and his promises, leaving the rest, but believing in

whole Christ, and all sorts of his promises. In brief, let not wicked men's snatching at what they cannot catch, hinder any bleeding, panting soul, that fain would, but dares not, embrace Christ and his promises, from receiving this gracious speech of his, and the like expressions of scripture, that although sense fails, yet in believing when it fails, they are blessed.

Consider we now, what blessedness that is which attends such a believing as excludes sight; as there is a three-fold special blessedness attending it.

A blessedness of present sweet repose, or rest, in all conditions without disturbance, I need not contend, I know, to make this good, that it is a blessed condition indeed to sleep on such a pillow as evaporates all cares out of the head, and drives away all anxieties of heart, and dispels all tossing turbulent fears; so that he who lays his head on it, can sleep as securely in a storm as in a calm, in a prison as in a palace, in the most pinching penury as the greatest plenty; now such, yea, and far more excellent a pillow is this faith in Christ alone. Faith mixed with sense, comes not near it in this great privilege, which I shall clearly illustrate by many evidences. Compare this unmixed faith with that which is mixed with corporeal sense, and see the difference. One man believes God loves him, and leans too much to his prosperous state of health, wealth, liberty, and the like; another believes and minds not this at all. Oh, what rest hath this last beyond the other! The first is no sooner sick or held under, or like Job, cashiered of all; or, like David, exiled; or, like Paul, imprisoned; but, Oh, how is he, like David, presently troubled! You might know David's disease by his pulse; "I said in my prosperity, I should never be moved, thou hast made my mountain strong; but thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." It is plain that he leaned too much on his prosperity. Too many find the same truth by woeful experience. Oh, how are they daunted, nay, even dreaded with crosses, losses, and such outward mishaps; nay, often questioning God's love now, which they suspected not before! And as such, changes are frequent, so vexations, distractions, and agonies of heart come thick.

On the other side, look on the unmixed faith, such as Job's, that he would trust though he were killed; see how still he is all the while his sad messengers follow one another at the heels, the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord," is all the disquiet he shows; nay, the Lord affirms his temper to be such, that in all that change "Job sinned not." Jonah cannot lose a gourd, but he frets as if he were undone, whilst Job sits still with the loss of all; Paul and Silas sing in prison, while their sides are torn with whips; Peter's heart is at his mouth when Christ speaks of the Jews cruelty, and out of fear tempts Christ, for which he was well reprimanded for his labour. I will give but one instance suiting with the times. Suppose two persons believe God's goodness to restore liberty to his church; the one hath his eye too busy on the means, suppose the Parliament; the other only on Christ's love to it, and the faithfulness of his promises of this nature. Now see the difference of the quiet rest of these two; the first, how anxiously solicitous is he for daily news! How disquieted if he cannot hear! How dejected and daunted if suspicions be but whispered! And how dead his heart, even as Nabal's, if such a hopeful means be frustrated and dissolved! Like David, as you heard before, when Saul had hunted him out of all his holes, there is no hope left then, he shall perish. But he that hath both feet on Christ, hath as much joy as the other in the prosperous success of fair means, and is moderate in his enquiry; his copyhold is not touched if the means fail; his footing is fast still, and therefore his heart stands fast. See an excellent instance like this in Mordecai, when the Jews were in a desperate case, the decree being gone out; Esther, the queen, was a likely means, as he tells her, to compass the deliverance; "who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" {Esther 4:14} Therefore he makes use of her, but yet he leaned not to her; for he tells her, that if she altogether held her peace at this time, yet enlargement and deliverance should arise to the Jews from another place. Such know that God hath a thousand ways to make good his word which they know not of, and therefore are no more troubled at the breaking of one string, than he that hath a dozen more to his bow. Such was Abraham's quietness and rest, when thousands would almost have broken their hearts with the task God set him; but he looked on this, that God was able {though he knew not how} to raise him {his Isaac} from the dead again. The like difference may be seen betwixt such as mingle natural reason with faith, and those that banish it. See this difference between Moses and Abraham; the former is passionate, and speaks unadvisedly, the other staggers

not. The same difference may as plainly be seen betwixt such as trust only in the name of the Lord, without regard to the presence or absence of spiritual experiences, and those that consult with them. How common is it to see the latter sort roaring for disquietness, breaking forth into pitiful agonies, not only for the sinfulness of the defects and failings they are conscious of, which is requisite, but with distractive fears of God's utter departure from them. Oh, what a mountainous task is it to settle and quiet such people again! The ebbings of their unsettled restless spirits, are double to the flowings of their comforts; nay, the still water of their spiritual rest is but for a moment in a manner, the least wind of failing {if their hearts be tender} sets them trembling like aspen leaves; and because such blasts of failings are as frequent as the stirring of some winds, they have as little rest as such leaves; but if a soul build on the rock alone, looking always upward for security, neglecting experiences for such an use as to prop up faith, the Lord himself must sink before they real; he must crack under them, before their hearts rise to their mouths; he must call in again what hath gone out of his mouth, and unseal what he hath sealed, before they will suspect their titles to him and his promises. In a word, he must change, before they can be made to believe that they shall be consumed. These sleep securely, whilst others, pouring on present storms with half-dead hearts, look every moment for swallowing up. What blessedness were it to a soul to be so thoroughly resolved when all conspire against it, and come with open mouth upon it, and yet it stands still and sees the salvation of the Lord? Certainly such establishment is not to be had, but where men believe without fetching their corner-stones from sensible experiences.

In such an unmixed faith, refined from sense, there is a transcendent blessedness in regard of the more abundant glory such a believing soul brings unto God. You know that speech, "it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive." Now; although properly and really we cannot give God anything, all being his due, yet he is pleased to account the glorifying of him "a giving of glory to him," which he takes more kindly than men do the greatest gifts given to them. See this fully cleared in an instance fit for our purpose, in Abraham, when God promised him a son by Sarah; observe his faith, how abstracted it was from sense, "he considered not his own body now dead;" and thus, "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." {Rom.4:19-21} If any ask what glory such an abstracted faith gives to God? I answer that it gives him the glory of his absolute independent power; it makes the world to see that they care not for any the least co-adjustors to help him out with his own work.

This glory did the faith of the three children, in Daniel, give God, which wrought strangely on that heathen king, "we are careless {say they} to answer thee in this matter; our God is able to deliver us;" whereas a faith mixed with sense robs him wonderfully of his glory, as I might easily show, but it is too obvious. So, it gives God the glory of his faithfulness and truth, by showing to the world that he is so good, that they care not for the best security in the world to be bound with him when he hath but passed his word. You know, that among men it makes much for a man's credit, that his only word will be taken for great sums, and further security is despised; so doth this taking God's word only, much advances his credit in the world. Christ inveighs bitterly against that adulterous generation that did seek a sign; intimating, how much they endeavored to impair his credit, that he could not be credited without a pawn. Paul, by this faith, gives this glory to God, "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." {II Tim.1:12}

On the other side, where faith hunts after sense, how pitifully is God robbed of his faithfulness? When men are not well, except they bare two strings to their bow, is it not manifest they suspect one? When men cannot sleep if they have but a man's own bond, they do not account such a one of small credit? And is not this a wounding him in his reputation, especially if they make it public? I might instance in many other particulars, wherein this single eye of faith glorifies God, which is the greatest blessedness to a soul upon earth.

In such an unmixed faith there is a great blessedness, in regard of the more abundant and comfortable fruition of the things so believed. The more and more abundant fruition of things

promised, you grant, doth cause the more abundant blessedness. Now consider what abundant fruition this faith hath beyond a mixed faith. You know that frequent reply of our Saviour to such as came out of need to him; "be it unto thee according to thy faith." But more especially, they that have the unmixed faith, possess good things promised more firmly and securely than such as have a mixed faith. A mixed faith hath the fruition of the promises but by halves; in their own eye they possess but as tenants at will; I mean as such, who look and fear to be turned out again at every manifestation of displeasure; yea, and often through such suspicion are turned out and left homeless; whereas the unmixed faith possesses things promised as a freeholder does his estate, wherein his propriety is unchangeable; though the Lord's displeasure grieve him, yet he suspects not dispossession, his title being as sound and good as he can make it. Thus doth a single faith possess promises.

They possess things promised far sooner than the other; for no sooner see they the conveyance, but they take possession presently, before they reap the crop; as Christ said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it, and was glad." He took possession of Christ as soon as he found him promised. On the other side, a mixed faith stays a great deal longer, and hath no possession till the bird be in the hand; promises to such, are like birds in the air or bush, until they be fulfilled; they cannot comfortably say, such a promise is my own, till they have tasted and drank of it.

They possess far more good things promised than the other. More for kind and more for measure. Where sense is made a support of faith, it oft leaves faith fast in the mire. Now, where faith fails, accomplishment of promises fails. On the other hand, where faith leans not at all on the adventitious succor of sensible experiences, though they fail with respect to the fulfilling of such or such, or their fulfilling in such a measure, yet faith fails not, but applies the promises, and enjoys the things promised.