

SERMON VII

THE NEW COVENANT OF FREE GRACE

Tobias Crisp

And I will "give thee for a Covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." {Is.42:6,7}

In the next place, as it is against the nature of a gift, so God doth not expect, nor will accept of anything from men in consideration of Christ; and, for this, the Scriptures are plain and clear, that the Father expects nothing in the world of men; no one qualification or spiritual disposition, before, or upon the communicating of his Son Christ unto men. I will but name some few passages to clear this to you, that I may not seem to come in my own name, in this that I have delivered.

Consider, among other passages, that in Isaiah 55:1,2, for it is plain there, as you may see, that God looks for nothing in the world of men; be they what they will, be they in the worst condition, no matter what it is, they are the men to whom Christ offers himself. "Ho, every one that thirsteth;" {saith Christ;} that is, every one that hath but a mind to come to him, every one that would take him, may have him; "come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread; and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Eat, but not buy; for it is said, "buy without money;" you may eat without price, and that which you shall eat is fatness. Mark what follows, "incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David;" {vs.3;} here you see the Covenant mentioned. But what doth God require here in the Covenant? No money, no price; the Covenant runs all upon mercy; it is an everlasting Covenant indeed, and an everlasting Covenant of mercy. Now mercy is the doing a thing only and merely of gift; if a man will forgive a debtor, and ask nothing of him, then he is a merciful man; so far as men give, so far are they merciful; so far as they sell, there is no mercy in that. But here is neither money, nor price, nor any thing at all in consideration of the Covenant. {Lk.7:42}

Likewise, in Hosea 14:4, God saith by the prophet, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him;" he will love you freely, that is the term; he will ask nothing for that good he will do unto you, it shall be freely; and what is more free than gift?

Look also into that notable place, worthy of all consideration, Ephesians, chapter 2, where the Apostle speaks most admirably sweetly to this point of giving and communicating Christ, and all that is Christ's unto men, merely of grace, merely of gift, without consideration of anything in the world; and there you have the reason, why God will do it merely of gift, and upon no other ground or cause at all, {in vs.4,} saying, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us," {here is the great principle that gives being to all that follows} "even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved;" now mark what follows, "and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus; for by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Here you see how notably the Apostle takes off all things in the world, whereby man may imagine to move God to show kindness, and give his Christ unto them; and attributes all to the riches of God's grace because of that "love wherewith he loved us." Hence it is

that he bestows Christ by grace; "and by this grace are we saved, and that not of ourselves, not of our works, lest any should boast."

I will not recite many places; one more, and then I have done with this. Look into the last of the Revelations, and you shall see Christ is so a gift passed over unto men, that God looks for, asks, requires nothing of men to their partaking of him; in verse 17, "let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." No matter for bringing of anything with you; have you a mind to him? Take him freely, and know that God scorns to make a sale of his Son. If men take him as a deed of gift, well and good; if they will have him upon other terms, God never means to part with him. I tell you, could you bring angelical perfection and obedience, and present that unto the Father as a motive to him to bestow his Christ upon you; if you dare offer the most perfect righteousness in the world for Christ; I say, you shall be accursed for it. "But though we, {saith the Apostle,} or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." {Gal.1:8} Any other gospel, than salvation, and participation of Christ, by grace and free gift; for that is the doctrine he had established before, and, through the whole epistle to the Galatians, doth maintain; let such person be accursed, saith Paul. And concerning those that will preach any other doctrine, or will establish any righteousness of man, and pervert the people of God from the sincerity of the doctrine and gospel they have received; the Apostle is so eager against them, that he breaks out into this expression, "I would they were even cut off, which trouble you," in the same Epistle, {5:12,} and upon the self-same ground we have in hand, he thus expresses himself, and why? Because they overthrew the great intent of the Lord, and those great thoughts he hath of himself; namely, that the world may see what a God of grace he is. If a man comes with works, towards the enjoyment of Christ, he overthrows the grace of God, and frustrates the great end for which God sent Christ into the world; for as you see it plainly there in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the place before mentioned, the Lord therefore comes to give Christ, to set forth "the praise of the glory of his free grace."

Secondly, this Gift {Christ I mean} given as a Covenant, imports unto you, that as the Father looks for nothing in men to partake of Christ, so also it doth imply, there is nothing in men, though never so vile, that can debar a person from a part in this Christ. Some will not have Christ, except they can pay for him; others dare not meddle with Christ, because they are so vile and wretched creatures that they think it impossible that Christ should belong to such wretched persons as they are. You know not {saith one} what an abominable sinner I am; you look upon others, but their sins are but ordinary; but mine are of a deep dye, and I shall die in them; the rebellion of my heart, is another kind of rebellion than is in others.

Beloved, let me tell you freely from the Lord; let men deem you as they will, and make yourself as bad as you can, I tell you, from the Lord, and I will make it good, there is not that sinfulness that can be imagined in a creature, that can be able to separate or debar any of you from a part in Christ; even, while you are thus sinful, Christ may be your Christ. Nay, I go further; suppose one person, in this congregation, should not only be the vilest sinner in the world, but should have all the sins of others, besides what he himself hath committed; if all these were laid upon the back of him, he should be a greater sinner than now he is; yet, if he should bear all the sins of others as I said, there is no bar to this person, but Christ may be his portion. Christ "bore the sins of many," {saith the text,} but he bare them not as his own, he bare them for many. Suppose the many, that are sinners, should have all their sins translated to one in particular; still there is no more sin than Christ died for; though they be all collected together. If other men's sins were translated upon you, and they had none, then they needed no Christ; all the need they have of Christ, were translated to you, and then the whole of Christ's obedience should be yours. Do but observe the strain of the Gospel, and you shall find that no sin in the world can be a bar to hinder a person from having a part in this Christ that is given; look upon the condition of persons {as they are revealed in the Gospel} to whom Christ is reached out; and the consideration of their persons will plainly show to you, that there is no kind of sinfulness that can bar a person from having a part in Christ.

Look into Ezekiel, chapter 6, quite through; the person is there considered in a state of blood, of menstruousness, of vileness and greatest filthiness that can be supposed. "None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live." "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a Covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine." {Ez.16:5,6,8} When "no eye could pity" such a person, or do any good to him; "I passed by thee," {saith Christ} and "thy time was the time of love;" yea I "swore unto thee, and entered into a Covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine." Construe this in a spiritual sense and conceive of a spiritual estate of filth that is proportionalable to a natural estate of filth. That very time of the vilest of our spiritual filthiness is the time of Christ's love, when he enters into Covenant. Yea, but sure the case is altered, before Christ actually swears. No; "then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly wished away thy blood." When? Even then when "I swore unto thee, and entered into Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." First, he did swear and then he did wash them; and not wash them, and then swear unto them, and enter into Covenant with them. First, "I entered into Covenant with thee, then washed I thee with water, and then put I jewels upon thee, &c." The first thing he doth is that he enters into Covenant, and the people become his people, and then he takes them in hand and washes and purges them, and not before.

Consider Christ's own expression. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." {Lk.19:10} "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." {Lk.5:32} "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." {Mt.9:12} Here still the persons are considered in the worst condition, {as some might think} rather than in the best. Our Saviour is pleased to express himself in a direct contrary way to the opinion of men. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." The poor publican that had nothing to plead for himself went away more justified than the proud Pharisee that pleaded with God; "I thank thee that I am not such an one."

Men think righteousness brings them near to Christ; but beloved righteousness is that which puts a man away from Christ.¹ Stumble not at the expression, for it is the clear truth of the Gospel; not simply doing of service and duty, doth put away from Christ; but upon the doing of duty and service, to expect acceptance with Christ, or participation in Christ, this kind of righteousness is the only separation between Christ and a people; and whereas sinfulness in the world can debar a people, their righteousness may debar them as well.

I need not tell you, what I have so often mentioned, that there must be a believing in him that justifies the ungodly; {Rom.4:5,6;} what can you look for of an ungodly person? If there can be any bar in the world to hinder a man from taking Christ, you would think it should be ungodliness; it is the ground of most, and all men's fears. But if the term ungodliness be not bad enough, consider, Christ goes further, even unto rebellion; for he hath received gifts for the rebellious. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." {Ps.68:18}

But some may be ready to say to me, though God be never so free in giving Christ unto men; yet they may never have a part in him, except they have hands to take and receive him. I answer, I beseech you consider, and I answer peremptorily, that though men have no hands to take Christ, yet may they receive him. I will clear this a little to you, first by illustration, or by way of similitude; a poor indigent person is speechless, he hath never a tongue; he is handless, he hath never a hand; he cannot ask with the tongue, he cannot take with the hand; if you have a mind to give, I ask, can you not give to such a person, because he hath not a tongue to speak, nor a hand to take? You may behold, and see the pitiful case of such a man, and your compassions may be stirred in you; and

¹ {Note: When it is trusted to, and depended upon, and put in the room of Christ and his righteousness; or when it is brought to fit a man for Christ, and give him a right and claim to him, and his benefit. Gill.}

whereas he cannot put a garment upon his own naked back, yet you may provide raiment, and put it upon his back with your hands, as well as if he had put it on himself; and thus God deals in bestowing Christ upon men. We are dumb and cannot speak, "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," saith the Apostle, {Rom.8:26,} but God being rich in compassion, he beholds our miserableness; his own bowels stir him up. Although there be no language in the creature to move him; yet out of these bowels of his, he will show pity and mercy to us, and reach out his Christ, to those that have no hands to receive him, no faith to believe in him. It is the Lord that puts this Christ on the back of those persons on whom he hath pity and compassion. {Is.61:10} I say, that although we have no hand, yet the Lord puts his Christ upon us; so it is not we that put him on, but the Lord that puts him upon us.

Secondly, to resolve the case more fully and clearly, observe a distinction very needful to be observed and considered; there is a twofold receiving of Christ; there is, first, a passive recipiency; and secondly, there is an active recipiency.²

First, there is a passive receiving of Christ, and that is, so that Christ is received without any hands; but in an active receiving of him, he is not received without hands; you will say, what is this passive receiving of Christ? I answer, a passive receiving of Christ, is just such a receiving of him, as when a froward patient takes a purge, or some bitter physic; he shuts his teeth against it, but the physician forceth his mouth open, and pours it down his throat, and so it works against his will, by the over-ruling power of one over him, that knows it is good for him. Thus I say, there is a passive recipiency, or receiving of Christ, which is the first receiving of him; when Christ comes by the gift of the Father to a person, whilst he is in the stubbornness of his own heart, being froward and cross; and the Father forces open the spirit of that man, and pours in his Son in spite of the receiver.³ There is such a kind of recipiency mentioned in scripture. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded." {Jer.31:18,19} Mark how Ephraim {who is the representative of the church} stands affected and disposed; when God comes first to tame and break the spirit of Ephraim, God is fain to get upon Ephraim, as an horse-rider is fain to get upon an unruly horse, that was never broken; he must fetter him upon all four, that he may stand still before he get up. So God must fetter Ephraim before he can get up, before he can tame him; "I was as a bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke," nothing but kicking and spurning at first; afterwards Ephraim becomes more gentle; "when I was converted, I smote upon my thigh, and was confounded;" but before, Ephraim was a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Hence it is that the entrance of Christ into a person is attributed unto the power of Christ. "Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power;" the power of the Lord must overcome a person, before Christ can take a possession of him, in regard of the crossness of the spirit of man to the pleasure of Christ.

At the first, then, there may be a passive receiving of Christ, by which Christ may enter and doth enter into the spirit of man, though the soul reach not forth the hand to take him in; but rather on the contrary part, fight against him by keeping him from entering; {Acts 9:3;} but now when this Christ is poured into the spirit of a man by the power of the Lord, then he begins to work, to break,

² {Note: And an excellent distinction it is; the learned Hoornbeeck takes notice of it, and has these words concerning it; "neither do we reject some distinctions of theirs [i.e. Dr. Crisp, and others, called Antinomians] as of the reception of Christ first passive, then active." Gill.}

³ {Note: This is to be understood of the state and condition, in which a man is, when God comes first to work upon him, in which he is passive; and the simile made use of, of a physician forcing a man's mouth open, and pouring physic against his will, is intended to illustrate, and does illustrate, the enmity and rebellion of the heart of man against Christ and his grace; and shows how disagreeable, to the carnal mind, are the methods which God takes when he first works upon it, either by afflictive providences, or by letting the Law into the conscience, which works wrath there; and not, as D. W. suggests, in his Gospel Truth, pg. 101, as if men were said to receive Christ against their wills; for, as the Doctor after observes, when Christ has entered into the soul, and has revealed himself, and shown it his excellency and his beauty, it embraces him, and holds him fast; when his power comes upon it, it is made willing to receive him, whom, before, it had a dislike of, and an aversion to. Gill.}

and to tame the spirit, to be at his own beck and pleasure; when Christ hath once revealed himself and made the soul to behold his beauty, and acquainted it with his excellency, then it begins to embrace him, and to hold him fast, and will not let him go.

Here comes in the second act of receiving Christ, when we, take him, perceiving that he is a friend and coming for good, and that there is no good but by him. {Micah 6:6,7} Christ is considered as given of the Father; and being given, the Father hath no regard to anything that a man can do for him, or anything he can do against him. But it may be, before I leave this, you will ask, is not unbelief a bar to have a part in Christ?

I answer, it is a bar to hinder the manifestation of Christ in the spirit; but it is not a bar to hinder one from having a part in Christ, on whom God doth bestow him. It is true, that you, nor I, can say by experience that Christ is ours, until we believe; for as long as we continue in total unbelief, we cannot conclude to our own spirits that Christ is ours; but unbelief is not simply a bar to the bestowing of Christ, to such a person; he bestows him without any regard to belief, or unbelief; if unbelief should be a bar to hinder Christ from being bestowed upon men, where is the man to whom Christ should be bestowed? There is no person under heaven considered simply as ungodly, and under the notion of ungodliness, but he is considered as an unbeliever, as well as a sinner in other respects; so that to the Father's giving of Christ, unbelief is not a bar; only to the inward satisfaction of the soul and spirit, unbelief is a bar; a soul cannot be resolved till it doth believe.

III. And so now I come to consider the third thing I proposed, namely. What it is for Christ to be given to open the blind eyes? There are two things very remarkable in it, that he is given to do this; for hence I infer, and the thing itself will clearly bear it. First, that Christ is actually passed over to a soul, and a possession of Christ is delivered unto persons, before ever their blind eyes are opened, or they come out of prison; that is, before they have any gracious qualifications whatsoever; and this is a truth that follows upon the former, that Christ himself is the first spiritual gift that the Father doth bestow upon any, before there be wrought any opening of the eyes, which is the first of all gracious qualifications wrought in a man.

Secondly, that the opening of the eyes, and bringing the prisoners out of prison, is the sole work of Christ; none doth this business but Christ alone when he is once given. The first will need a little clearing, and thereby the second will be sufficiently evidenced, being a truth of very great concern, and yet seldom seriously considered; I say, that Christ is actually given and passed over to men, and made really theirs, before ever there be any gracious qualifications put into the soul of such a man. I say, as before, observe this caution, I speak of God's giving Christ unto men, not of the manifestation of him unto a man to be his; there is, and must be faith, as I said before, for the manifestation of him to be ours; but there is no qualification wrought in the heart of any person, before Christ be actually passed over, and made his in the Covenant. Now, I say, Christ is given and passed over to such a person, before he has any gracious qualifications; I do not mean, as some do, that God did actually decree Christ, unto such and such, before he put any qualifications in them; this is a truth indeed; but I say further, that God gives actual possession of Christ, and Christ takes possession of that person, before there be any qualifications wrought in him; now Christ is given, not only to perform some common acts of God's providence, but he is given as the Covenant itself; he enters, and actually justifies a person, before any qualification be wrought in him.

Now I shall endeavour to clear this, by all possible evidence I can; as the Scripture is plain for it, in Isaiah 61:1,2,8, and so forward; there you shall see that Christ is actually given unto men, before any gracious qualifications whatsoever be wrought in them. "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me," saith Christ; for they are his words, as he himself applies them, in the sermon that he preached. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." {Lk.4:18,19} Observe it, I pray you, here Christ hath a business to do in the world; which is, "to bind up the brokenhearted;" and, the Lord hath anointed him to this business. What is that anointing? The Lord hath separated him, designed him to it; and according to his designation, places him where he

may do it; this is meant by anointing. Now, when a man is set apart, and sent about such a business; he must be there corporally or virtually before that is done, which he is sent to do; he is sent to do a thing, therefore he must be there where it is to be done; a man is not said to do a thing, when it is done before he come; if Christ be sent to bind up the brokenhearted, and if it be his business; certainly they are not bound up before he comes to bind them; and if he comes to bind them up, then he is present before they are bound up.

But, peradventure, you will say, by this text, here are broken hearts first, before Christ be sent to bind them up; therefore there must be broken hearts before Christ come to the soul. To this I answer, that a broken heart is to be considered in a double sense, either, first, simply for a heart undone; or, secondly, for one sensible of its own undoing. You know, men are said to be undone, and broke, when their estates are broke, and their credit cracked; and, they may be said to be broke, when they have examined their own books, and find that they are, and so seek to their creditors to make agreement; they may be considered as broken, supposing and considering what their condition is simply in itself, as they are undone in it; or else, they apprehend themselves to be undone, and so make agreement.

Now, with these two kinds of brokenness of heart considered, I answer that it is most certainly true in the first sense, that there is a broken heart, before Christ is considered as present to bind it up; that is men are really undone, before he comes to restore them; but these persons are not sensible of their own brokenness of heart, until Christ comes and makes them sensible of it.

Therefore, if you will speak of the sense of breaking, I flatly affirm, that Christ is actually given, and is come unto the soul, before sensibleness be wrought in the soul. Mark but the Covenant as it is recited, and who is it that deals with the heart of man to take away the stoniness of it, and to give a meltingness unto it? "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, &c." {Ezek.36:26,27} "I will – I will, &c;" who is that? It is he that did obtain a more excellent ministry, "by how much also he is the Mediator of a better Covenant;" even the Mediator of this Covenant, and it is he that takes away the stony heart; and, if he breaks it, how can there be said to be a broken heart, before Christ comes to do it?

Therefore, in brief, know this, that Christ is sent unto men, as to bind up their hearts, when they are broken, so graciously to break them, when they are hard; first, he breaks them, then he binds them up; Christ is sent "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." People think by their humiliations, sorrows, mourning and obedience, and such like, to get Christ; but is plain that the very spirit of mourning is the work of Christ upon a person, and that he is present to work it too. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him;" {Zech.12:10;} who was it that poured this spirit of grace and supplication upon them? Christ, who was pierced, and on whom they shall look that had pierced him. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced;" this is he that poured out the spirit of supplication and mourning; so, if it be Christ that was pierced, as is plain, then it is also plain that he poured out the spirit of grace, supplication, and mourning; how then can they mourn before Christ comes, when it is he, after he is come, that doth effect this very thing?

Object any qualification whatsoever, and it will appear most evident and plain, that it is Christ himself, after he is come, that works it; even faith itself, which is called the radical grace of all graces, is not given until Christ himself be given men, who works this very faith. "Looking unto Jesus {saith the Apostle} the author and finisher of our faith." {Heb.12:2} Christ is the author; what faith can there be then till he comes to work it?

Consider Psalm 68:18 compared with Ephesians 4:8, and you shall plainly see that Christ is given unto men before there be any qualifications of any grace whatsoever in them. "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious," saith the Psalmist; "thou hast given gifts unto men," saith the Apostle; put them both together and we see that Christ received for and gave gifts unto rebellious men. Consider, I pray,

what gracious dispositions and qualifications are considerable in rebellious men; for as they are rebellious, there can be none considered; but Christ received for, and gave gifts to the rebellious; therefore, he is given, and accordingly gives whatsoever any person hath before he hath anything.

There are many notable arguments in Scripture most absolutely establishing this truth; that Christ is given and made over unto men before they have any qualification whatsoever. Christ is called "the head of the body, the church, and the beginning." {Col.1:18} These two metaphors illustrate and establish this truth.

First, Christ is the beginning. He that is the beginning of all things is before all things; not only in the being of nature before all things, but actually present before all things be begun. He that is the builder of the house, doth not come after it is begun to be built; but he is present at the place before a stone is laid, because he is the man that must lay it, he is the beginner of it; and if he be the beginning, whatsoever is begun, is after him that is the beginning.

Secondly, Christ is the head. This is the other metaphor, whereby is set forth, that Christ must upon necessity be in the soul, be actually passed over unto men, before they can have any gracious qualifications. A head is the fountain of all animal and sensitive spirits, and of all motion; without a head a man cannot hear, see, walk, feel, stir, nor do anything, seeing all these operations come from the head. Consider the body as headless and all the senses are absent, and without a head nothing is done. Christ is the head of his church; {so saith the Apostle;} that is, he is the fountain of all spiritual sense and motion. You may as soon conceive that a man is able to see whilst he hath not a head; as to think, a man can have spiritual eyes, whether the eye of faith to behold Christ, or the eyes of mourning to lament one's wretchedness, before there be actually the presence and conjunction of Christ the head, unto such a body. Beloved, to think a man can have any spiritual sight before Christ be actually united to the soul, is all one, as for a man to think to see before he has eyes. The eyes are placed in the head; both the organs, faculties and spirits all are in the head. How can a man see that hath neither eyes nor spirits to feed them; which he hath not, while he hath not a head, where all these are planted. Christ must be the eye, and be present to give sight; therefore, the Scripture expressly says that Christ is given "for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, &c.;" {Is.42:6,7;} and if to open them, then they are not opened before he gives them sight.

And, thirdly, as Christ is called a Head, and a Beginning; so also Life, frequently in the Scripture. "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me." {Jn.14:6} Can a man be an active creature, before there be life breathed into him? The Lord, {saith the text} at the creation, breathed into man the breath of life, and so man became a living soul. He was like a stone, till he received life; but now, saith the Apostle, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." {Gal.2:20} "By the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." {I Cor.15:10} Paul was an active soul. How? By the grace of God. That is, as a body, without a soul is dead; so every person, in spiritual actions, is wholly dead, till Christ the soul of the soul be infused into him, to animate and enliven him. I shall not spend more time in urging more arguments; though I might be large to show that Christ is the first thing given unto us, before all other whatsoever. For if this light be not enough, we must wait till the Lord in his time will reveal his truth.

IV. And now in a word or two consider, who they are, to whom Christ is given to be a Covenant. All this is good news, will some say, to those unto whom it is sent. Many thousands cry out, Oh, but it is none of my portion, nor my portion, that Christ should be given as a Covenant to me.

I shall not be large in this, though some may expect it; the text will tell in part, who those are to whom Christ is given for a Covenant; to wit, the people and the Gentiles, one, as well as another. God gives Christ to men without respect of persons, to Jews and Gentiles. You shall find through the whole course of the Scripture, the persons to whom Christ is exhibited are still expressed in the most general terms; if a man would know for whom he came, it is answered, Christ came to seek and to save those that are lost; in due time, he came to die for the ungodly; and that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; and while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The Scripture

runs upon this strain; why then should any man come and cry, "Christ died not for me, he is not given for me." Why, art thou a convinced sinner? He was given for thee, if thou art truly saying with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The king puts forth a proclamation, and in it he pardons all thieves; what mad or foolish thief will say, Oh, but the king doth not mean me, he may mean others, but not me! Why, he means thieves in general, he excepts none; why shouldst thou say, not me? If there be the name of thieves in general, without particular mentioning of some, they will come in, and take their portion. Beloved, so Christ deals with men, he is given to the people, to the Gentiles; art thou of the people? Art thou of the Gentiles? If thou art, why is he not given to thee? Nay more, it is the people and Gentiles considered as sinners?

But some will be ready to say, you know that Christ is not given to all people, and all Gentiles; for some do miscarry, and possibly I may be among them, that do miscarry; but how shall I know that I am among the number of such sinners that shall not miscarry, and that my portion is in this Christ? Beloved, here observe by the way, now we are speaking of knowing whether Christ be mine, or no, not simply of Christ's being ours, but of his manifestation, or of knowing him to be ours, how shall I know it? You will say, there are labyrinths, in which a man may walk, and by hap may chance to hit the right, in the finding of this great truth, so much searched after, how a man may know whether Christ be his or no? To lead you in a plain and sure way; the best way for any man to know whether Christ be his or no, is to consider the conveyance in which he is made over to men; see the terms of conveyance, and according to these terms, such is the security of your title. Now the terms of conveyance {as I have often told you} are only such as in deed of gift, and a deed of gift universally exhibited and reached out. Therefore, I must tell you, there is no better way to know your portion in Christ, than upon the general tender of the gospel, to conclude absolutely that he is yours, and so, without any more ado, to take him, as tendered to you, on his word; {Is.55:1;} and this taking of him, upon a general tender, is the greatest security in the world that Christ is yours.⁴ Say unto your souls {and let not this be contradicted, seeing Christ hath reached out himself to sinners as sinners;} my part is as good as any mans; set down thy rest here; question it not, but believe it; it is as good security as God can make thee; he hath promised, venture thy soul upon it, without seeking for further security. But, some will say, he doth not belong to me; why not to thee? Christ belongs to sinners, as sinners; and if there be no worse than sinfulness, rebellion, and enmity in thee, he belongs to thee, as well as to any in the world; and there is nothing at all that can give thee a certainty that he is thine, but receiving him on these terms.⁵ "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." {Jn.1:11-13}

Christ receiveth sinners, as sinners; he never shut out one of all those thousands that came upon the tender of the gospel; he never put any by; "but to as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God." Bring me any one instance in the whole book of God, of any one that hath come to Christ, and taken him upon the tender of the gospel, and yet he hath put this person by. It is true, in a shallow matter, concerning a bodily cure, the woman comes to Christ, and at the first, he would not hear, then he calls her a dog; yet before they parted, Christ not only accepts

⁴ {Note: This is the principal passage on which the Dutch Professor Hoornbeeck has laid the charge of holding universal redemption to the Doctor, concluding, from this general tender, or offer of Christ to all, that he held the universal satisfaction of Christ for all, and that all have an equal portion in it; from whence they might be assured Christ as theirs, and not from any condition in themselves; and, indeed the universal offer, cannot be supported without supposing universal redemption; which those, who are fond of, and yet profess particular redemption, would do well to consider. Gill.}

⁵ {Note: This is putting it upon a much better foot than the general tender; which is no security to any, of Christ being his; nor even general redemption itself, since all have not a portion in him, or are saved by him; but, Christ dying for the worst and chief of sinners, and his promise to receive, and his actually receiving them as such, are the best security, and on which a poor sinner, under a deep sense of sin may rely; and be encouraged to apply to Christ, and lay hold upon him as his own Saviour. See the last paragraph of the next sermon, where the Doctor mentions a better security than the general tender. Gill.}

the woman, but breaks out into admiration, "Oh woman, great is thy faith!" But, I say, in the business of partaking of Christ, show me an instance of any in all the Book of God that have ventured upon the general tender of Christ, which was rejected. {Rev.22:17} If there be no example, in all the Scripture, from whence fetch you this bitterness of your own spirits that you may not, that you dare not, close with Christ?

But, you will say to me, if this taking of Christ be the best security, how shall I know whether I believe or no? Or how shall I know whether this my taking is not a counterfeit, but a solid, substantial, real, taking of Christ.

I answer, by the reality of the thing. Do you it indeed? If you do it indeed, it is a real taking. If a man should ask you; how do you know the sun shines? The light of it shows itself; and, by its light, we know it shines. How shall I know I believe? There is a light in faith that discovers itself unto men. The soul that really closes with Christ may conclude that he doth. If you give sixpence to a poor man, and then ask him, how do you know I have given you it, and that you have it? Why, saith he, I have it in my hand, and find, and feel that I have it. So, ask your hearts this question, how do I know I believe in Christ? Do I cast my heart upon this truth? Do I receive it as one that I do believe, or do I reject it, or will not receive it? Then I do not believe; but if you sit down, and rest upon it, and receive it, and do in reality believe it; then you may absolutely conclude Christ is yours. In respect of time, I cannot amplify any further; but, I hope, for the present, this will give satisfaction. A word or two for application, and so I will conclude.

Is this a truth, as hath been by Scripture proved to you that Christ is given a Covenant to men, to open their blind eyes? Then it is plain, they begin at the wrong end of the bottom who begin to wind up at the graciousness of their own spirits, from thence to have comfort. If you begin at any other end than at Christ to get grace and comfort, you do as they do that take the inmost end of the bottom of the thread, and begin to ravel there; so that little or no work is done, but much and many a knot, and broken ends made, and the work quite spoiled; whereas, if they began at the utmost end of the bottom, it would have run without disturbance.

Beloved, Christ is given to open men's blind eyes; go whither you will, you shall never have your eyes spiritually opened, except you go to him; Oh, what a do is here with men, or in men, with breaking their own hearts, and forsaking their sins! And whither do they run? They run to their inherent righteousness, their qualifications, their prayers, their tears, their humiliations, sorrows, reformations, universal obedience, and the like; but is this to run to free grace and free mercy in Christ? Nay, Christ, alas, is never thought of; he is clean forgotten, and wholly neglected, and not considered all this while. Here is ploughing with a wooden plough; here is a working upon a dead horse, or rather with one. What is in the heart of a man to plough up the rock of his own heart? No marvel that you sweat and toil and moil all the day long, and all lies in the same case it did; there is no strength to bring forth; because you go in your own, or the strength of the creature, and not in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know that when a pump is dry, men use not to stand labouring at it till they sweat; but they first come, and fetch a bucket of water, and pour the water into it, and then they fall to pumping, and by virtue of the water poured, there comes more water up, and by continual pumping they fetch out abundance; so your hearts are dry things, there is no sap, no moisture, no life in them; Christ must first be poured in, before you can get anything out; wherefore then do you stand labouring and tugging in vain? Oh, stay no longer, go to Christ; it is he that must break thy rocky heart, before the plough can come over it, or at least enter into it. As I told you before, so I tell you again, you must consider Christ as freely given unto you by the Father, even before you can believe.

There is a story of Ebedmelech; the black-moor in Jeremiah, {Jeremiah, chapter 38,} who by his interest and favour with the king, got leave to go to the dungeon to Jeremiah to fetch him out; he carries ropes with him, lets them down and causeth Jeremiah to put them under his arms, and round about him; now Jeremiah by holding fast the ropes doth not pull him into the pit, but he pulls Jeremiah out of the pit to himself. I speak this by way of illustration. Christ is our Ebedmelech with the Father, the great King of Glory; his dealing prevails that he may have liberty to pluck us poor

Jeremiah's out of the pit and dungeon of sin and Satan, of misery and destruction. How doth he this? He doth not first send ropes, and then come after, but goes and carries them with him; that is, Christ doth not send faith first to believers, and then comes after as drawn by it; no, but he comes and brings it with him, and he, being present, lets it down to them; and when they have it, they do not draw Christ down to them by it, but holding it fast, he draws them up to himself. So here is not faith first, and then Christ; but Christ comes first and gives faith to apprehend and lay hold upon him. Consider therefore, Christ as your Ebedmelech, who comes and reaches himself out to draw you up, and being first present, reaches out faith to you, by which you may hold; so Christ fetches you out of the pit.

Wherefore {to draw to a conclusion} remember this, as you run to Christ, so shall you prosper in everything you take in hand; all the business that Christ undertakes shall go on a-main, whilst all that the creature undertakes shall stand at a stop. Make trial, begin but with Christ; take him along with you in your entrance upon anything, and you have a mighty Counsellor to guide and direct you, for so Christ is called; and good counsel, you know, is very useful for a prosperous expedition of things. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." {Is.9:6} Again, you have a tower and refuge fully secure to retreat to in case of extremity or of over-mastership. It was once a prime piece of policy, when in combat with an enemy, to make sure of some good fort, and to maintain that; so that if the enemy be too strong, they may know whither to go to be hid and saved from the present danger; and without such a refuge they are all liable to be cut off; so do you begin with Christ; make sure of him when you enter into the field of the world; get but this fort, and you have a place of retreat upon all occasions, where there is most certain security, which the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against, for Christ is that impregnable rock; but this is not all.

Christ is also the water of life; take but Christ along with you, and then in all your travels no sooner do you begin to faint, but there is living water at hand; you may drink of it, and your spirits shall be refreshed and revived. What shall I say more to you? It is Christ that oils the wheels of your chariots, and makes you run the ways of God's commandments? It is he that fills the sails; you must needs lie at a calm, if he be not present to blow in them. Take Christ with you, and you have the wind at command. Many a mariner would give the world to have such a privilege as to command the natural winds, and to make them blow when and which way he listeth; he would never then lie wind-bound. Beloved, you that have Christ have the wind in your fists; you may be carried to any port you will. If you have him, you shall have a swift gale, and shall sail a-main by his power. Therefore, if Christ be poured forth, and a gift unto men, and so cheap that you may have him for nothing, only receiving him, let this be your everlasting cry and song, none but Christ, none but Christ! Or rather, in the language of the Apostle, "I desire to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."