

# Heart's Ease in Heart Trouble

*or,*

*A Sovereign Remedy against all Trouble of Heart that Christ's Disciples are subject to, under all kinds of Afflictions in this Life. Prescribed by the great Physician the Lord Jesus Christ, which hath never failed those that have used it, or ever will, to the End of the World.*

By J. B., a Servant of Jesus Christ, 1690

*Editor's Note: This book was only published under the initials J. B., but other sources indicate that the author was probably the Rev. James Bardwood.*

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An Epistle to the Meek and Lowly-Hearted Readers,  
who have learned of their dear Lord so to be, who himself will not break the bruised reed,  
nor quench the smoking flax.

*Charitable reader,*

*Charity (which is the bond of perfection, and the greatest rarity now in the world, and in the Church too, the more is the pity) thou must put on, who readest this, the plainest and most unpolished piece that ever thou sawest (for the author never had skill in dressing), if thou meanest to profit any thing by it, which is the only thing, God knows, is aimed at by the author, who always prays and studies to speak (and write) rather to men's hearts than ears, his own and others'; and by God's Word, to work faith, rather than feed fancy: Charity, I say, thou must have, for that will cover a multitude of sins, much more of infirmities, which here thou must expect to meet: Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, 1 Cor. 13:7. If thou wilt but exercise thy charity in reading, and join therewith thy fervent prayers for a blessing, thou mayest attain thine end and mine also, to wit, thy edification; for charity edifieth.*

*In hope of gaining thy charity, suffer me to give a short (but true) account of the ensuing treatise, viz. I being about three years since, for some reasons, retired from my family and place of abode; and by sickness, and other things, confined; during which time, many of my dear friends and relations in Christ were called home to their Father's house; whereupon I thought it my duty to write some lines to their surviving relations, as I was by them desired to do; and after seeking God for counsel and assistance, I thought on this text spoken to in the following discourse; (for it was not at the least in my thoughts ever to publish this, or any other, knowing my own inability) I wrote in my homely style what thou wilt here find (all except the title-page, this, and the post-script) calculating it to the capacities of the plainest Christians; to whom I then sent it, and with whom it lodged; until about six months since it pleased the only wise God to bring me to a trial of my faith and patience; so deep a stroke it was, that I used all means for my support; and it came into my mind, that such a thing I had written so long before, to help in such cases, and that several had found benefit by it, I made enquiry after it, and at last found it; and in reading of it, as the Word of God, and begging God's blessing on it, I found much relief and comfort thereby, (all praise and thanks to God) and thereupon had some small inclinations to communicate the same to others; and after many strugglings and reluctancies in my self, and with prayers and tears I besought the Lord to direct me: at last I considered, I must shortly put off this my earthly tabernacle, and having for many years been lain aside like a broken vessel of no use, and compassed with many bodily infirmities, I was willing to leave behind me a little scrap of my labors to my children and friends, to put them in mind of what I had taught them for above thirty years together, that they might be fortified against all the troubles of this life, and by faith in God and Christ, hold fast and not lose their crown.*

*But why so mean a thing as this among the learned labors of so many eminent writers on the like subject? I answer, that our Lord took special notice of the widow's mites; and he will not despise the day of small things, Zech. 4:10.*

*But what can you aim at? may be said. Answer: Not applause to be sure, being conscious of my weakness; nor profit or gain, expecting but acceptance: but this, God and my conscience bear me witness, this is my aim, my most humble and fervent prayer, that some of Christ's poor little flock (my children and others, whose souls are precious to me, and whom I dearly love in the Lord) may receive some advantage; and chiefly, that God may have all the glory, who hath chosen the weak things of this world, etc. and who accepts the will for the deed, etc. Such as will not make use of it, let them do better, and I will be glad.*

*None may be afraid to buy or read it, for there is not a word of the State, or Church-matters in it; I daily pray for the prosperity of both, but think it not my duty to meddle with either, but in subjection.*

*Two requests I have to thee, loving reader:*

*1. Pray for a blessing upon as much as you find to be the express will of God.*

*2. Pray for me, that I may more and more find and feel the life and power of those, and all the truths of God in mine own heart, and may express more of the life of faith in my whole conversation, and I will also pray for thee, that thou mayest find as much (and much more) benefit in reading this, as I have in composing and perusing it; all praise to the God of all grace. If you find some passages (in your opinion) too often repeated, be not offended, till you find them too powerful on your hearts.*

*Thus committing this poor essay to the blessing of him who is the Father of mercies, and can teach us to profit, by his Word and rod, and thyself to his love and favour in Jesus Christ; in him I remain for thy soul's good,*

*Thy humble servant, J.B.*

# Heart's Ease in Heart Trouble

*"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God,  
believe also in me"—John 14:1.*

## Introduction

These words are a part of our blessed Savior's last sermon upon earth just before His passion, which begins (as is probable) at the 13th verse of the 13th chapter of this gospel, and ends at the last verse of the 16th chapter; in which verse our Lord tells His disciples (how dear soever they were to Him, yet) in the world they should have persecution, tribulation, of which He had often told them before, in effect, that they should not expect their heaven here but His cross they must bear, if they would wear His crown: tribulations of all kinds, outward and inward, you must endure; it is your portion here; you are thereunto appointed.

Man is naturally born to trouble, as the sparks naturally fly upwards; and new-born to trouble also, and commonly to new and more troubles. Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:18. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" of hand or tongue, one way or other. Indeed, such as can be content with a profession of a godliness that may suit with the times; that can please themselves with any kind of godliness, or with a form, any form of godliness, and that can change their forms when they please, such may avoid persecution; but all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, in the power and spirit of Christ Jesus, and resolve to live up to the example and rule of Christ Jesus, they shall have persecution, no avoiding of it. No entering into the kingdom of God but by tribulation. But notwithstanding, this our Lord lays this positive command on His disciples: "Let not your heart be troubled."

These poor disciples were like shortly to sustain a heavy loss of their dearest Lord. He was now a-going away from them, a greater loss they could not have. And yet, saith Christ, "Let not your heart be troubled." Which command is repeated and explained in the 27th verse, "Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid."

What! might they say, must we not be troubled at all? Must nothing trouble us? No, we must not be troubled for any outward loss, for any outward tribulation, for parting with the nearest and dearest relation, we must not be troubled. Yet we are not forbidden to be troubled for Zion. It is a grievous sin not to be grieved for the afflictions of Joseph; surely we must be troubled for God's dishonor, because men break God's commandments. Trouble of heart, except for sin, is sinful trouble. Where sin lies heavy, affliction lies light. Isa. 33:24 "They shall not say, I am sick; for their iniquities shall be forgiven them." Sense of pardon to those souls that have the burden of sin, much alleviates and lightens the burden of affliction. "Strike, Lord," said Luther, "now I am absolved from my sin."

We are always too prone to fall into extremes, to sin either in excess or in defect; too much, or too little; we are faulty both ways. As for sin, which is the worst of evils, we are apt to be troubled too little. How few fail here in the excess, though it is possible so to do; and some have that refuse to be comforted by all the sweet promises of Christ in the gospel; but there are but few of those; most of us fail in the defect. We are not troubled for sin so much as we should; our sins do not lie so hard and heavy upon us as they should; our hearts so seldom feel the weight of sin pressing us down. Many sins lie light on us. Our vain thoughts, our omissions, careless performance of holy duties, misspending precious time, idle talk, etc. and such like evils, which should trouble us most, they trouble us least.

But our afflictions, which, comparatively, are but light, lie too heavy upon us, and press us down even to the dust. So, in respect of afflictions themselves, we are apt to run into extremes, against which the Holy Ghost gives caution as to both extremes: Prov. 3:11, 12. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his chastisements"; the apostle explains it, "neither faint when thou art corrected of him," Heb. 12:5, 6, adding a most powerful argument against these extremes, ver. 6. "For whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth"; and therefore despise, not His chastisements and fatherly corrections; slight them not, for they come from a loving Father, a wise Father, and should not be despised by His children; they are the fruits of His love. Also, you must not be weary of

them, nor faint under them, for the same reason, viz. because they shall not hurt you; they flow from your Father's love, from a Father they come, who delighteth in you, and therefore ye ought not to faint under them; or, as it is in the text, whatever affliction befalls you, "Let not your heart be troubled."

It is heart-trouble, you see, that is here forbidden; not a filial sense of God's hand, nor a childlike acknowledgment of God's rod. God's rod hath a voice, and its voice must be heard. When His hand is lifted up to strike, to lay on any blows on us, or on any of our relations, or earthly comforts, we must observe it, and Him, and acknowledge the same. But, not to acknowledge, and observe the hand of God; not to consider in the day of adversity; not to humble ourselves under His mighty hand; not to stoop and yield to God, but to think, or say, of our affliction, that it cannot be helped, there is no remedy, it is common and ordinary, and the like—this is to despise the chastening of the Lord. Take heed of this. But yet, we must take heed, too, that under the pretence of being sensible of the hand of God, and of His strokes upon us, that we do not fall into the other extreme of being weary of His chastisements, and of despondency, and fainting under His corrections; we must be careful that we do not let our hearts be troubled.

Question: But is it possible that we should be afflicted, deprived of liberty, of estate, of loving relations, of the desire of our eyes, and of the delight of our hearts (for such in a most eminent manner was Jesus Christ to His disciples, He was the desire of all nations) and not be troubled at our very hearts? Can we behold our Benjamins, our Sarahs, our Rebekahs, our Josephs, etc. taken away, our dear husbands, or loving, faithful, tender wives snatched away from us with a stroke, with a sudden stroke, to be in a moment deprived of such comforts, and in such a time too, in an evil time, in a sad and suffering time, when such helpers would sweeten our sufferings, and help bear our burdens, would give us sweet counsel, and uphold us in the way of God? What, is it possible such knots should be untied, and so suddenly, such flowers crompt off, cut down; such sweet friends removed from us, as lay once in our bosoms, and sent to the chambers of darkness, sealed up in the dust, made silent in the grave, to see their sweet faces no more, till the heavens be no more? Is it possible, I say, in such cases not to be troubled? or if it be possible, is it necessary, or is it attainable? May we arrive to such a temper, may we get such a calm, quiet, tranquil, and submissive frame of spirit? It is admirable, but is it attainable?

I answer, We must not despise the chastenings of the Lord, as was noted before. We must not be as stocks or stones, altogether insensible of the hand of God upon us. No, we must be sensible, we must lay those things to our hearts, and consider the work of God. Such losses, and of such, are to be lamented; they will be found wanting; their relations will find them wanting; their families will find them wanting; the poor will find them wanting, and the church also. David lamented the loss of Jonathan; and the disciples the loss of Lazarus. Lawful it is, then, to be affected with the deaths and departures of our dear relations and friends, and moderately to mourn for them. But our care must be that we suffer not nature to work alone without grace, for then it will soon go beyond its bounds. Nature must be restrained and bounded. It is moderate mourning that is lawful. Mourn we may, "but not as those that have no hope." 1 Thess. 4:13, 14. For, those that sleep in Jesus, they being safe and happy; for, "if we believe that Jesus died, rose again; even so they that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Troubled we cannot choose but be in such cases, and under such strokes, but we must not let our hearts be troubled, saith our Lord. And what this imports, you shall see by and by. It is trouble of heart that is forbidden. But what is it that will prevent or cure this heart trouble? Our Savior answers in the next words: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me: in my Father's house are many mansions," etc. In which, we may observe these parts, viz.:

1. An evil disease, or spiritual distemper; intimated and prohibited, to which the disciples of Christ are incident and prone in time of affliction; and that is, trouble of heart. This may seize you, but take heed of it, labor against it. As if the Lord had said, I know it will be a cutting, a killing thing to you to part with Me, your dear and loving Lord and Master; but part with Me you must, and take heed of this indecent distemper of heart trouble: "Let not your heart be troubled," saith our Lord Jesus.

2. The best preventive of, or remedy for this spiritual distemper proposed and enjoined: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." As if our Lord had said, Surely you believe in God; why then are your hearts troubled? Cannot your faith in God support you, if you act it upon Him; but if that cannot, then act your faith also on Me; "believe also in me." Set your faith to work on Me. Believe that I love you, that when I leave you, I will not leave you comfortless; "I will send the Comforter unto you, and he shall abide with you for ever." Jn. 14:16, 17. Therefore let not your hearts be troubled. "Believe in me," I must leave you, and I you must part; but, believe where I am going, and let the consideration of that quiet you. "In my Father's house are many mansions." There is a better, a far better condition for you above, than that you are in here. For, here you are tossed up and down from place to place, and are exposed to many straits. I Myself here on earth have not a house wherein to lay My head; but in My Father's house are many mansions." There is a house above, "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5:1. When once you come thither, you shall remove no more; there are many mansions, room enough for you all, and for all the innumerable company of angels and saints; therefore, "believe in me"; for these things are most true that I tell you. And believe also "that I go to prepare a place for you." I go to take possession of those celestial mansions, of those everlasting habitations for you in your name and stead. While you

are here on earth I shall prepare you for those mansions; and when I go from you, I will prepare them for you. Therefore, to prevent those heart troubles which you are subject to, because of My departure from you, and to fortify you against them (for I am solicitous for you), this is the remedy that I propose you, and enjoin you to practice; that seeing "you believe in God, believe also in me." Act your faith on Me.

From which words thus explained, I commend to your Christian consideration this gospel doctrine, viz.:

**Doctrine: "That the lively acting of true faith upon God and Christ, or upon God in Christ, is the best preventive of, and remedy against heart trouble, under the greatest loss whatsoever." Or "Faith acted on God in Christ is the sovereign cure of heart trouble."**

Our Lord Jesus is very tender over His poor disciples, and having foretold them of the hard usage, and bad entertainment they should meet with in the world, losses and crosses, tribulations and persecutions; He now leaves with them some antidotes against distempers of mind; some cordials against those faintings of spirit, and troubles of heart, to which He knew they, being flesh and blood, were subject. And this in the text, is chief and principal: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." This your faith will be your best cure, your best remedy.

Poor believers are but princes in disguise here in this world. Princes they are, Christ hath made them all so. But while here below they are in a foreign land, under a veil. "It doth not now appear what they shall be." 1 Jn. 3:2. They have a large patrimony, but it lies indeed in a land unknown to the world. It is in Terra Incognita, if the expression can be borne. The holy, the great God Himself is their portion, their heritage. God is their sure, their full, their lasting, their everlasting portion. They are "heirs of a kingdom." Jas. 2:5. "Heirs of salvation." Heb. 2, last. "Heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ." Rom. 8:17. "Yea, all things of this world are theirs." 1 Cor. 3:21. All things are blessed and sanctified to them, and shall conduce to their spiritual and eternal welfare. Rom. 8:28. Yet notwithstanding all this, and although heaven and earth lies at the feet (as it were) of godliness, and of those that profess it, in the power of it; "Godliness having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. 4:8, and, notwithstanding, believers have a true title to all the good of both worlds; yet, may those poor but blessed saints be exposed to manifold temptations and tribulations in this world; they may have a dark, and sad, and stormy way of it to their Father's house; they may be stripped of all their earthly comforts, may be deprived of their liberty, estate, nearest friends and relations, as we read in Scripture, that such hath been the portion of the best saints; and upon this the people of God have been dejected and disquieted; they have desponded, their hearts have been troubled, and have thereby displeased their heavenly Father, who would have them believe that all things shall work together for their good.

Now, our Lord, in this text, forbids this distemper of mind, and would not have His disciples, who had God for their Father, and Himself for their Redeemer, and who had title to such happiness in the other world, to despond, and to be disquieted; therefore He lays this charge on them, "Let not your heart be troubled," adding the proper means to prevent this sinful malady of heart trouble, that it might not seize on them; or if it had, to cure them of it, viz. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

The lively acting of true faith upon God in Christ, it is the best preventive of and remedy against heart trouble under the greatest loss whatsoever. Which proposition I shall prosecute, in the assistance of God's Spirit; and according to the measures of light and grace I have received, after this manner and method following:

First by way of demonstration; secondly, of confirmation; and then to apply and make improvement of it for our use.

## I. By Way of Demonstration

Endeavoring to show,

First, that God's choicest saints are in this world subject to all kinds of troubles, losses, and afflictions; and whence it is, and why so.

Secondly, That under these losses and affliction, they are subject to despond, to be dejected, and to be troubled in their hearts.

Thirdly, what this *heart trouble* is, that Christ forbids here.

Fourthly, how, that believing in God and Christ is the best means to prevent, and cure this *heart trouble*.

## **A. God's choicest saints are in this world subject to all kinds of troubles**

First, that God's choicest saints are liable to all kinds of troubles, losses, and afflictions; even the greatest, heaviest, and sorest; as we read of Job, David, Heman, and others.

God had but one *Son* without sin, but no son without suffering. His only begotten Son was a man of sorrows: and the Holy Ghost assures us that "if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." Heb. 12:8.

God's children are liable to sufferings, whether we consider them as *men*, or as *Christians*; as *men*, Job. 14:1. "Man that is born of a woman . . . is full of trouble." As our relations and comforts increase, so do the occasions of trouble. God never appointed this world to be the place of man's *rest*, but of our exercise, and only a *passage* to another world: and in this our passage we must look for storms and tempests. If we can through mercy obtain a tolerable passage through this world, and a comfortable passage out of it into that better above, we shall have cause to bless the Lord to all eternity.

And much more, as Christians, must we expect troubles: for a man is no sooner brought home to God, but he must expect to be hated by the world, assaulted by Satan, chastened by the Lord; our own corrupt hearts will be always vexing; the old man, the flesh, thwarting all the motions of the new nature, "lusting against the spirit." The lusts of flesh will be as pricks in our eyes, and as thorns in our sides; we shall have enemies in our own houses.

But this truth is so manifest in all the Scripture, that I shall insist no longer on it, only shall add this by way of use: let all Christians prepare for affliction, by getting an interest in God through Christ, by getting sin pardoned and purged, by getting peace with God and conscience, by getting hearts crucified to the world; and then when troubles come, let us bear them as Christians, not murmur, nor repine, but in patience possess our souls; not desponding nor fainting; remembering that our troubles are no more, but infinitely less than we have deserved. Job. 24:23, "He will not lay upon man more than right." God perfectly understands our need, and knows our strength. 1 Pet. 1:6, "If need be, ye are in heaviness." "He is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." 1 Cor. 10:13. It is the wise, just, and gracious God, and our Father, that tempers our cup for us. Many earthly parents do not correct their children in *measure*, being ignorant of their nature and disposition; and therefore their correction doth them no good. Many physicians mistake the constitution of their patients, and therefore may do them more hurt than good; but God knows our need and our strength, and so suits all His remedies accordingly; therefore let us be patient, bearing our troubles with an equal mind, not suffering as *per force*, but willingly. It is said, Dan. 3:8, "That day yielded their bodies," that is, cheerfully, "to the fire." In our affliction let us search our hearts and try our ways. Let us fly to God by prayer, and resign up ourselves to Him, and trust in Him, casting our cares and burdens on Him. Psa. 55:22; 1 Pet. 5:7.

Moreover, it is our wisdom, that while we are at ease, have our comforts about us, let us look for troubles; afflictions *from* God, as well as *for* God, are part of our cross which we must take up daily. Sickness, death of friends, loss of estate, etc. We must look for them that we may not be surprised.

He that buildeth a house, or a ship, doth not make this his work and care, that it should not rain upon it; or that it should have no storms or tempests, for this cannot be prevented by any care of ours, but that the house or ship may be made able to endure all without prejudice. So must it be our care to provide for afflictions; for to prevent them altogether we cannot; but prepare for them we may, and must, as was hinted before; to treasure up God's promises, and store our souls with graces, and spiritual comforts, and firm resolutions in God's strength, to bear up and hold on; we had need be well "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Eph. 6:15.

Most Christians are not mortified and crucified to the world, not acquainted with God and the promises, as they ought to be, nor so resolved to follow God fully, as they ought, and therefore are so dejected and discontented when affliction comes. Oh that we did count the cost, when we first begin to make profession of Christ: and that we had such full persuasions of the incomparable worth and excellencies of the Lord Jesus, as that we could willingly part with all things for his sake! Oh that we had such believing apprehensions of the wisdom, faithfulness, righteousness, and mercy of God, such sights of His reconciled face, and such tastes of His fatherly love to us in Christ, as that we could quietly submit to His holy will, and be well satisfied with all dispensations toward us. So much of this first particular.

## **B. Disciples are apt to be troubled in their hearts under afflictions in this world**

Secondly, The disciples of Christ, under the afflictions which they meet with in this world, are apt to be troubled in their hearts, to be disquieted in their minds, to be dejected and discouraged. It was so with holy David, Psa. 42:5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" He was sensible of his afflictions, and that disquieted him, and cast him down. God's people are subject to such disquietments, because they are flesh and blood, subject to the same passions, made of the same

mould, subject to the same impressions from without as other men, and their natures are upheld with the same supports and refreshments as others, the withdrawing and want of which affecteth them as well as others. And besides those troubles they suffer in common with others, by reason of their being called out of the world, the world hates them, and they are therefore more exposed to tribulation than others, and so are apt to be cast down and discouraged. This our Lord foresaw would befall His disciples after His departure from them; and therefore He counsels them against the same: "Let not your heart be troubled."

Question: But it may be demanded, Whence ariseth this heart trouble, and disquietment of mind under affliction?

Answer: There are many causes of it, which is necessary for us to know, that so, knowing the causes, we may the better find the cure. There are outward and inward causes.

### ***B.1 Outward causes***

First, Outward causes. And the first may be God Himself. He sometimes withdraws the beams of His countenance, withholdeth the sense of His love, hideth His face from His children (which the saints in Scripture so bitterly complain of, and so earnestly pray against). Whereupon the souls, even of the strongest Christians, are disquieted. This caused trouble to the soul of Jesus Christ Himself. Jn. 12:37. When a poor child of God, together with his affliction, apprehends God to be his enemy, and that his troubles are mixed with God's displeasure; and it may be his conscience tells him that God hath a just quarrel against him, because he hath not walked so holily, so humbly, so evenly, and so strictly with God, as he might, had he been more watchful, careful, and circumspect; and that he hath not renewed and kept his peace with God as he should, and might have done; and this sense of God's displeasure puts a sting into all his afflictions, and this causeth trouble of heart and disquietment of mind. And justly may such a soul be troubled that has ever felt the "joys of God's salvation," the sweet influences of his love, that has "tasted that the Lord is gracious, seeing that in his favor is life, and his lovingkindness is better than life." Psa. 30:5; 63:3.

Secondly, The devil is the cause sometimes of the heart trouble of God's children. For he being a cursed spirit, cast out of heaven, full of disquietment and discontent himself, labors all he can to trouble and disquiet others, to bring others (as much as in him lies) into the same cursed condition with himself. He being cast out of paradise himself, envies us the paradise of a good and quiet conscience, for that is our paradise until we come to heaven; and this paradise a poor child of God may possess in a prison, in a dungeon, on a dunghill.

Two main designs the devil hath upon men; the one is, if possibly, by all imaginable sleights, temptations, and enticements, he may keep men in a course of ungodliness, to hinder them from coming to Christ by faith and repentance, to deter them from His holy ways. And when he cannot prosper in this, but that unsearchable rich and free grace takes hold of some poor souls, and they are snatched out of his hands, their captivity led captive by that mighty Redeemer, then all the devil's labor is to hinder their comfort, and to interrupt their peace, and to make their way to heaven as hard and uncomfortable to them as possible, pursuing them with all dejecting and heart-troubling temptations.

Thirdly, Wicked men are also active in the troubling of God's people; they are indeed the true troublers of God's Israel. They load God's people with reproaches, and there is nothing that the nature of man is more impatient of than reproaches, for there is no man so mean but thinks himself worthy of some respect; now a reproachful scorn shows an utter disrespect of a man, which flows from the very superfluity of malice. "Reproach hath broken my heart," saith David, Psa. 69:20, and nothing more doth he complain of than reproach, and nothing more are God's people liable to than this. These are the causes from without.

### ***B.2 Inward causes***

Secondly, There are inward causes also of heart trouble and despondency. When God's people are in affliction, most time that black cloud of melancholy also surrounds them, and darkness makes men fearful and dejected.

There are many causes within ourselves, as ignorance of God, and of Christ, of the covenant of grace, of the name of God. They that know God's name will trust in Him, and not be dejected. Also, forgetfulness of God and of what He hath done for us. We forget God when we are afraid of man. Our overlooking and passing by the many comforts we enjoy, even while we are under affliction, taking little notice of our mercies, but let them be all swallowed up in our miseries; as Abraham, because he had no heir; and Rachel, who said, "Give me children, or I die." Though she had all other earthly comforts, yet the want of this one so troubled her that all the rest seemed nothing.

It is an evil thing for us to be wedded to our own wills. None more subject to discontent than those who would have all things after their own way, and are mere strangers to self-denial. Likewise, false apprehensions of things cause heart trouble. To think God hates us because He corrects us, and when He takes from us, that it is all in wrath. Another common cause is our own watchlessness and carelessness, our neglect of keeping our hearts and consciences pure and clean; and in

time of affliction, these former neglects of duty come to our minds, then conscience awakes, and tells our former faults, and this brings trouble of heart. 1 Kings 17:18.

Moreover, unnecessary scruples cause disquietness, solitariness, idleness; when persons will not do what is needful, they are troubled with that which is needless; and idleness tempts the devil to tempt us and trouble us. If we cannot find work for ourselves, the devil will make work for us.

Also when we are guilty of neglecting doing good to others, as to our relations, not reproving, admonishing, or encouraging them as we ought, or have neglected to receive that good from them that we might, but now they are dead and gone, and we can no more do any good to them, nor receive any from them. This hath troubled many on their sick and death-beds.

Inconstancy, wavering in the ways of God, will also breed disquiet. And our inordinate love of creature comforts, our setting of our hearts on friends, estates, and the like, setting our hearts on husbands, wives, children, etc. This is to build castles in the air, expecting contentment in and from those things that cannot yield it. Also multitude of worldly business, and too much poring on our afflictions, and forecasting the events of things. You see what a crowd of causes here be within ourselves of disquiet and heart trouble.

## **C. What is this heart trouble which Christ forbids?**

The third particular proposed is, what is this heart trouble which Christ here forbids His people, and that He would fortify them against?

Answer: This heart trouble is such a sense of evils felt or feared; as creates to us disquietment, dejection, despondency, depriving us of that tranquility, peace and comfort which we had in ourselves, or otherwise might have; it is a disturbance of our passions, such a storm and tempest in our spirits as causeth inward motions, emotions, and commotions of mind, putting all things in the soul out of order: and it carries in it several evil things, as follows:

### ***C.1 Sinful, worldly sorrow.***

First, Sinful worldly sorrow. When Christ had told His disciples that He would leave them, and that after He was gone they should be exposed to hard and heavy things from the world, bitter persecution for His name's sake, then sorrow filled their hearts. Jn. 16:1-6.

God's own servants, Christ's own disciples, may have their hearts filled with sorrow. Against this our Lord commands many preservatives in this sermon. The ground of this sorrow is from ourselves, from our own hearts, though Satan will have a hand in it: and it comes not from humility but from pride. Because we cannot have our own wills, therefore we are discontented. We may thank ourselves not only for our troubles, but for our over-much troubling of ourselves in our troubles. If we ward and guard against this worldly sorrow, our troubles would not lie so heavy on us as they do; for, as the joy of the Lord doth raise and strengthen the soul, so doth sorrow deject and weaken it. Sorrow and grief doth lie like lead to the heart, cold and heavy, and sinks it downward still. Sorrow contracteth and draweth the soul into itself, from that communion and comfort it might have with God and man; and it weakeneth the execution of the offices of it, because it drinketh up the spirits, it melteth the soul, it causeth it to drop away. Yea, in this kind of heart trouble God's own people are many times more excessive than others.

1. Because many times their burdens are greater, their temptations, desertions, troubles for sin greater; as their joys are unspeakable and glorious, so their sorrows are sometimes above expression. Common and natural courage will carry a man through other single afflictions; but sin is a heavier burden than affliction, and the wrath of God than the wrath of man.

2. They have a greater sense than others, their hearts being made tender by religion; they have also a clearer judgment than others, and see more into the nature of things than others. They see a greater evil in sin, and in the displeasure of God, than others. They value God's favor more than others, therefore when He hides His face, they cannot but be troubled. They observe more of the displeasure of God in afflictive providences than others do, and therefore they have more sorrow.

3. They have more tender affections than others; the new heart is a soft heart. A stamp is sooner set upon the wax than upon a stone. A wicked man hath more cause to be troubled than a godly man, but he is not a man of that tenderness and sense, and therefore is not so affected, either with God's dealings with him or with his dealings with God.

Thus we find often in Scripture good souls depressed with sorrow. David said, he was like a skin-bottle in the smoke, all wrinkled and dried up. Read Psa. 38 and 39:11. "When thou with rebukes doth correct man for sin," that is, by



sicknesses, death of relations, and other losses, "thou makest his beauty," that is, of his outward man, "to consume away like a moth." Whereas the beauty of the soul grows fair by affliction, but that of the body is blasted. Age, sickness, losses, will make the beauty of the body to fade, but of the soul to shine. 2 Cor. 4:16, "Though our outward man doth decay and perish, our inward man is renewed day by day." But for worldly sorrow, that too often not only weakeneth the body but also causeth heart trouble. "A merry heart doth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones." Prov. 17:22.

*Question: Is this worldly sorrow lawful and commendable?*

Answer: No surely, for there are many evils in it, which we should avoid. As,

1. Impatience and murmuring against God, that is an effect of immoderate sorrow. When our wills are crossed we cannot bear it, for want of self-denial.

2. Quarrelling at instruments.

3. Using indirect means for our relief. It is better to pine away in our afflictions, than to be freed from them by sinning.

4. Desponding and distrustful thoughts of God. "Is his mercy clean gone? will he be favorable no more?" Psa. 77:7, 8.

5. Questioning our interest in God, merely because of the affliction upon us. Judg. 6:13, "If God be with us, why is all this befallen us?" Not considering how hard soever God dealeth with His people, yet He loveth them. Heb. 12:6.

6. Sometimes atheistical thoughts do arise, as if there were no God, no Providence, Psa. 73:13, as if it were in vain to serve the Lord.

7. This worldly sorrow indisposeth to all good duties; it makes a man like an instrument out of time, or a bone out of joint; which makes the body move both uncomely and painfully. It unfits for duty to God and man.

8. It makes a man forget former mercies, and overlook present mercies; all is nothing under present sufferings. "Give me children or else I die."

9. It makes us unfit to receive mercies, and to embrace the best counsels; such plasters will not stick, they refuse to be comforted. Psa. 77:2.

10. It disposeth us to receive any temptation. Satan hath never more advantage than upon discontent.

11. It hinders beginners from coming unto the ways of God.

12. It rejoiceth and hardeneth the wicked, and it grieves and damps the spirits of our friends. All these and many more evils are in worldly sorrow.

Therefore, this evil temper we must labor against, and not suffer ourselves to be dejected in sickness, contempt in the world, loss of friends and relations, loss of honor, and earthly interest. May we only think to be exempted from chastisements, whereof all God's children are partakers? Heb. 12:8. And must God make a new way to Heaven for us? Or, do we think it best for us to live here forever, in ease, and plenty, and honor, and never see a change? No, surely it is in vain to think so. It becometh us betimes to prepare for crosses. None so strong, lively and brisk now but they shall shortly wither and decay. None hold their heads so high now but they must shortly lay them down in the dust. We, and our dearest relations must part.

It would be our wisdom, to turn the stream of our sorrow for losses and crosses, into godly sorrow for sin. Then it will run in its right channel. Let our sins lie heavy upon us, and then our afflictions will lie light: let us grow weary of our sins, not of our sufferings. God "doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Lam. 3:33. Let us consider also, the real spiritual benefit of affliction. God aims at our profit; and in good time, in the best time He will send deliverance. And be sure, those that are not unmindful of their duty, God will not be unmindful of their safety.

But that which should mostly affect us, and make us take heed of immoderate worldly sorrow, is to consider that this kind of sorrow of heart is God's curse, imprecated on God's enemies. Lam. 3:65, "Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse." As godly sorrow is God's blessing, a grace of God's Spirit, a fruit of the covenant of grace, and a fruit of faith, Zech. 12:10, so worldly sorrow is God's curse, and a bitter fruit of unbelief. They that sorrow for sin shall be comforted, Matt. 5:4, but they that mourn immoderately for outward losses, there shall be none to comfort them. This is the first piece of heart trouble which Jesus Christ hath forbidden, "Let not your heart be troubled"; that is, not filled and overcome with worldly sorrow. Whatever your losses and crosses be, let not your sorrow go beyond its lawful bounds. Take heed, "Let not your heart be troubled."

## ***C.2 Sinful fear.***

Secondly, another piece of heart trouble is sinful fear. Against this distemper also Christ counseleth His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid," as verse 27. As if He had said, Let not that distemper of base slavish fear seize your hearts.

This fear is a passion, or rather a perturbation of mind, whereby, upon the sense of approaching evils, the mind is discomposed and disordered, and the heart troubled and dejected.

This fear is a tyrant where it comes, and it tyrannizeth where it prevails, as Job 4:14, 15. We read how it prevailed over that famous believer, the father of believers, to his prejudice, and to the discredit of his religion, who for fear denied his wife once and again. Gen. 12 and Gen. 20. And good Isaac was taken in the same fault. Gen. 26. This fear troubles men's peace, and disquiets their minds, that they are said sometimes to be like the leaves of the forest: and this fear is often forbidden to Abraham, Gen. 15:1, and to Isaac, Gen. 26:24. And when Israel was in the greatest dangers that ever men were, they were forbidden to fear. Ex. 14:13; Isa. 8:12. And in the New Testament, our Lord strongly cautions against this fear. Luke 12:4, 32; Rev. 2:10. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." Slavish fear troubles the heart more than any thing.

Objection: But may we not fear God's judgments? Did not good Josiah tremble at them? And did not holy David say, in Psa. 119:120, "I am afraid of thy judgments"?

Answer: Doubtless, it is our duty so to do. When we see the same sins abound, for which God hath executed His judgments in former times, we ought to lay them to heart, and to be affected. Jer. 7:12; Luke 17:26, etc. "Remember Lot's wife," said our Lord. So, 1 Cor. 10; 2 Pet. 2:6; Rom. 1:18; Zeph. 3:6, 7, a remarkable scripture.

Although it went well with Nehemiah himself, yet had he a sad resentment of the state of Jerusalem. Neh. 1.

God's people have tender hearts. Wicked men have hearts of stone; when God smites them, they are not grieved. Jer. 5:3.

*But we must distinguish of fear.*

1. There is natural lawful fear, when evils are approaching to our bodies, or names, or friends, or the like, dangers are apparent, it is natural to fear. This was in the best men in the world. It was in Christ Himself. Mark 12:14, 15. Also it is said, "He feared, and was sore amazed," Mk. 13:33, yet without sin.

2. There is a lawful filial fear of God's judgments, which ariseth from the consideration of the evil of sin, and of God's righteousness, of His hatred of sin, and His wrath against it; which fear produceth repentance, self-examination, a turning to God with our whole hearts, thorough reformation, and an endeavor to secure ourselves in God's covenant, and to hide ourselves. Prov. 22:3, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself." A striving to get into Christ, and to get clear evidence of God's love to us in Christ. I say, such a fear that worketh these effects is a great duty.

3. There is a base slavish fear of approaching evils, arising from our misapprehensions of God; producing in us unworthy thoughts, sinking into despondency, and inciting to murmuring and impatience, and putting us upon sinful shifts, the use of unlawful means to prevent or escape dangers; a fear of despondency, a vexatious, distracting fear that drives from God, and unfits for service. A tormenting, disquieting fear that unsettles and discomposeth our minds, disturbs our peace, suspends our acts of faith, and disposeth us to diffidence, distrust, and impatience. This is the fear that Christ would not have His people's heart troubled with.

## ***C.3 Vexatious, distracting care.***

Thirdly, Another piece of heart trouble is vexatious, distracting care, which our Lord would not have His disciples trouble themselves with, and therefore He useth so many powerful arguments to dissuade them from it. Matt. 6 from ver. 25 onward. First, He assures us it is God that takes care for our bodily life, we trust Him with that. How much more should we for food and raiment. Secondly, Saith He, Your Father takes care for the fowls, and provides for them. "Are ye not much better than they?" Thirdly, He clotheth the lilies, "and will he not clothe you?" Fourthly, You cannot by all your care make your condition better than God hath appointed it shall be. Ver. 27. Fifthly, Your heavenly Father knows you want all these things. Sixthly, They that are ignorant of God and of His fatherly care and good providence, that have no God to care for them, they trouble themselves with those cares; therefore you should not do so who have a heavenly Father that dearly loves you, and looks after you. Seventhly, You have the promise of the faithful God, to have all necessaries provided for you, while you make it your care to serve, and please, and trust Him. Ver. 23, "All these things shall be added unto you." Eighthly, We have no cause to be thoughtful for time to come, because every day brings evil enough with it; and therefore it is no wisdom to perplex ourselves with cares. Ver. last. So again, Luke 21:34; Phil. 4:6.

"Be careful for nothing." Our Lord also shows us how prejudicial such cares are to our profiting by the word, Matt. 13:22, and expressly commands us to cast our cares upon Him, for He careth for us. 1 Pet. 5:7.

#### ***C.4 Despondency of spirit.***

Fourthly, Despondency of spirit, dejectedness, distrust, discouragement, are other pieces of heart trouble. Such as was in David, Psa. 142:3-5; 143:4; 42:5. Casting down breeds disquietness because it springs from pride, which is a turbulent passion, and everything that crosseth and disappoints it, causeth a combustion in the mind. When a man cannot come down and stoop to that condition that God casts him into, then is he discontented; and this comes from his pride.

A Christian should be very careful, to keep up his spirits, when his condition in the world falls down. Could we but bring our minds to our conditions, to like and be pleased with our conditions, as being certainly persuaded that our present condition is best for us; it would be all as good, all as well, all as comfortable to us, as if we could bring our conditions to our minds; for one of these must be done, or else we shall never be free from heart trouble while we live. Either our minds must be brought just even to, and suited and compliant to our conditions, be it sickness, poverty, shame, prison, etc., or our conditions must be suited just even to our minds. We have a mind to health, to liberty, etc. We must have them, or we are troubled. Now, this latter is wholly and altogether out of our power. We cannot "add a cubit to our stature." It is the Lord that appoints all our conditions for us; we cannot make our conditions happy, honorable, etc. of ourselves, and without God. But the former is in our power. By the help of God's Spirit of grace we may bring our minds to our conditions. It is a holy art, attainable in the use of God's means. Contentment in and with our condition is the bringing of our minds to our conditions, to lie even, and suitable, and square one with the other. And this is, as I said, a holy art, attainable by Christians. Phil. 4:11. Paul had learned it, and so may other Christians. It is suitableness between our minds and our conditions that breeds quiet and content; and if we have not quiet in our own minds, all outward comforts will do no more good than a silken stocking to a scabbed leg, or a golden slipper to a gouty foot.

Now, it is only God that can, but never will (except in wrath) bring any man's condition to his mind; for then his conditions should be changed almost every moment; so mutable is man's mind. God will not bring the condition of the wicked to their mind, (except in wrath, as was said) for, as their outward prosperity doth increase, so doth their desires after more. And the wise man tells us, "The eye is never satisfied with seeing." And the more they have the more they crave. *They can never have enough.* And for the godly themselves, they are not so free from covetousness as they should be, but still need to learn this lesson of contentment, and to be learning of it all their days. And most commonly if not always, God by His grace brings their minds to their conditions, and not their condition to their minds. And for this, wise Agur prays. Prov. 30:9. Two dangerous extremes he prays against, the one is poverty, that would breed discontent; in that his mind would be below his condition, debased to vile and sinful practices, as stealing, etc. The other is riches, that would breed discontent; in that his mind would be above his condition, and that would lift him up to base pride and forgetfulness of God. Therefore he begs a suitableness and conveniency between his mind and his condition: "Feed me with food convenient."

Certainly we shall never be free from heart trouble till our minds be brought suitable to our conditions, and such a frame would prevent casting down in time of affliction. To like our condition, to be pleased and satisfied with it, and with the holy will of God in it; that is, to be content, content with sickness, poverty, shame, prison, loss of relations and friends, etc. In a word, when our wills lie even with God's will, (as in all reason they should) and our minds lie even with our conditions, then have we inward peace and tranquility, quietness and contentment, and never till then. And then sickness is as good as health and poverty as good as riches; and a prison, etc. And this is that blessed frame of spirit we must labor for, and we ourselves shall have the sweetness of it. Otherwise, it is in a man's mind, as it is with the body when bones are out of joint, there is nothing but pain and trouble. But this bringing of our minds to our conditions is as the setting of the bone again. Casting down ourselves, despondency, discouragement, which arise from discontent, are great pieces of heart trouble.

This distrust of God's providence is a grand evil. When we think we cannot live, unless we have a greater portion of earthly things, and this sets us upon carking cares, we know not how we and ours shall be provided for, etc. Now this we may cure, by casting ourselves upon God's promises. 1 Pet. 5:7; Psa. 34:10; 84:11; Heb. 13:5. Let us cast ourselves on God's providence. Will He provide for ravens, and clothe lilies, and neglect His own children? It cannot be imagined.

Earthly things are but a vain show. They can give us no joy of heart, nor peace of conscience. They cannot add one cubit to our stature, nor one moment to our lives.

Moreover, this happy state of mind is attainable. Eli had it, 1 Sam. 3:18, and David, 2 Sam. 15:25, 26. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." Therefore let us labor for such a spirit; such a contented frame of mind is worth a

kingdom. Without it, godliness itself is not great gain. It must be labored for. Paul said he had learned it. It was a hard lesson, but sweet when learned.

### ***C.5 Persecution***

Fifthly, Persecution may cause heart trouble; when men are offended, Matt. 13:21, when Peter was an offence to Christ, He was a trouble to him. Our Lord did on purpose foretell His disciples what persecutions they should undergo, that they might not be offended. Jn. 16:1. Forewarned, forearmed. It is a blessed thing not to be offended at persecution or Christ. He foretold His disciples the night before His passion that all of them should be offended at Him that night. Matt. 16:31, 56. Which came to pass, for one of them openly denied Him and the rest forsook Him and fled. To be troubled at persecution for Christ's sake is to be offended at the cross of Christ; and that He would not have His disciples to be by any means. Mk. 8, last.

Objection: But is it not said, Psa. 119:165, "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them?" How then come the people of God to be offended?

I answer, They that truly love God's law, because they love God, such shall have peace with God, and with their own consciences, and that is great peace and nothing shall offend them. That is, much trouble them, since they have peace with God and with their own consciences. Outward losses and crosses are easily borne, they shall make no breach upon their inward peace. They that have this character of God's children will not be stumbled at God's dispensations, let them be never so cross to their desires, because they have a God to fly unto in all their trouble, and a sure covenant to rest upon. Therefore the reproaches cast on them and on the ways of God do not scandalize them, for they have found God in that way which others speak evil of. They are not so offended by any thing that attends the way of God, as to dislike or forsake that way. Nevertheless, we must take heed that we be not offended.

### ***C.6 Temptations from Satan***

Sixthly, Temptations from Satan may cause heart trouble and vexation. Satan's suggestions, his fiery darts, these tormenting thoughts which he calls into the minds of Christ's disciples, create to them much disturbance and heart trouble. So soon as any man is plucked out of the devil's hands by the mighty power of Christ's Spirit, he falls upon him speedily with all his force to trouble such a soul and vex it, so that he shall enjoy little peace if Satan can hinder it. So long as the devil keeps possession in the soul, he keeps all in peace (a sad peace!). But when a stronger than he comes, and casteth out this strong man armed, then Satan rageth to recover his lost captive soul, and vexeth that soul with all his temptations. But let not this break your peace, nor cause heart trouble. As Christ hath overcome the world, and therefore bids His disciples to be of good cheer, Jn. 16:33, so hath He also overcome the devil. He hath trodden this serpent under His feet already, and this Prince of Peace will tread him under your feet also shortly. Therefore, "Let not your heart be troubled."

### ***C.7 Desertion***

Seventhly, Desertion, another (and not the least) piece of heart trouble. This may be the case of Christ's disciples. We read of the saints complaining that God had forsaken them; and when He hideth His face they cannot but be troubled.

Sometimes God doth but seem to hide His face. Isa. 49:14, 15. When God takes away their earthly comforts from them and suffereth sharp and bitter afflictions to befall them; and though they cry unto Him, He doth not remove them, then they think that God hath forsaken them.

Sometimes God doth really forsake His people, as to the sense of His favor. Isa. 54:7, 8, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee. In a little wrath I hide my face from thee for a moment." And this is either by withholding comfort from them, which they cry for; or by withdrawing that comfort from them which they had. Psa. 51:11 and 78:1-3, 23 compared. Yet here God supported and sustained His servant's soul with grace many times. When God's people have least comfort, they have most grace, most humility, patience, self-denial, thirstings after God, heavenly mindedness, etc.

God's people may lose the sense of His love, but never lose His love, for that is everlasting. But to lose the sense of His love is a grievous trouble to a gracious soul, that hath tasted and felt the love of God and His favor; for their great happiness is to have the favor of God. "In his favor is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life." This is the joy of their lives, Psa. 119:135, which David so earnestly prayed for. Now such as have found this must needs be troubled when they lose it.

Two things chiefly cause God to hide His face from His people.

1. When their hearts are too set upon, and carried out after earthly comforts. Psa. 30:6, 7. Fleshly delight, and confidence in earthly things, provokes God to hide his face. When a man smiles so much on the world, and gives it so

much room in his heart, God frowns, and is offended that the gift should be so much loved, and the Giver so neglected and forgotten.

2. When their hearts are let out too little after God, and there grows a strangeness between God and them, and they begin to grow cold, dull, and dead in duty, then God withdraws and hides Himself, Cant. 2:3, 5, 6 compared. But no affliction like this; this disquieteth and dejecteth the people of God indeed. And as all the candles in the world cannot make it day when the sun is set, so all the comforts in the world cannot rejoice such a soul, nor can there be any day in such a soul, until "the Sun of righteousness arise there with healing in his wings." Mal. 4:2.

So much for this third particular, showing what this heart trouble is, which our Lord here forbids in His disciples, namely, worldly sorrow, sinful, slavish fear, distracting care, despondency, dejectedness of spirit, distrust, offence at persecution for Christ's sake, Satan's temptations, and spiritual desertions, all which may either be the causes, or the parts and pieces of heart trouble, which must be avoided.

## **D. Faith is the best antidote to sinful heart trouble.**

The fourth particular to be opened is to show how that *believing in God and in Christ is the best antidote against this sinful heart trouble*; Christ proposeth it as a special remedy.

Question: But how is it so?

Answer: To answer this, I shall endeavor to show these three things.

1. What is it to believe in God: "Ye believe in God"?

2. What it is to believe in Christ: "Believe also in me"?

3. That this faith acted on God and Christ is the best remedy to prevent and cure heart trouble in all those several parts of it I have mentioned.

### ***D.1 What is it to believe in God?***

What is this believing in God is, which our Savior here grants that they had: "Ye believe in God." Briefly, the apostle tells us, Heb. 11:6, it is to believe that God is, that there is a God, an infinite first and best Being. To believe that God is that, all that, which He hath revealed Himself in His word to be, viz. that He is an "all-sufficient, almighty, only-wise God; a righteous, gracious, merciful God: a holy God, a loving God." He proclaims His name Himself. Ex. 34:6, 7, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth," etc. To believe that He is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Isa. 28: last. That He is the Father of mercies, the true and faithful God, the God of all grace and of all consolation; with many more admirable attributes doth the Scripture furnish us, that we may build our faith and place our trust in Him, to prevent heart trouble and to cure it when it hath seized on us. Whatsoever is revealed of God in His word, that true faith believes.

Also this faith in God is to believe that "He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." That He being God all-sufficient, He is able to support, to supply, to deliver His people out of all their troubles, and that He is willing so to do, as well as able, for He hath promised, and He is a rewarder, a God that will abundantly, plentifully reward all His suffering ones. Great shall be their reward in heaven. Matt 5:12. And to believe God to be a rewarder, is to lay hold on His covenant, wherein He promises so to be. I will be thy God, "thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Gen. 15:1. The sum of the covenant is, "I will be thy God." What is that but this, I will be all that to thee, and I will do all that to thee, and I will do all that for thee which a God can be to thee, and do for thee. I will be a "sun and a shield" to thee. Psal. 84: last. I will give thee grace and glory, and will withhold no good thing from thee. I that am the infinite first and best being of all things, the living fountain of all mercy, the origin of all power and goodness; I will be a God to thee, thy God, thy Father, if thou wilt take me for thy God and place all thy happiness in Me, and wilt become My servant, and give up thyself sincerely to Me, to serve and obey, to love and fear, and trust Me only. This is to believe in God, to accept of God for our God, and to yield up ourselves to Him to be His people. Isa. 56:46; to choose the things that please Him, to give Him our hearts, and become His servants, as Deut. 26:17, 18. And so proposed Himself to Abraham when He called him, Gen. 12:1-3, as a rewarder; and more fully, Gen. 15:1: "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward;" and so Abraham's faith was to act on God so manifested; and Gen. 17:1, I am God all-sufficient, all-sufficient to support thee in thy way and work, and all-sufficient to reward thee in the end; therefore, be thou upright and faithful. Let not thy heart be troubled, whatever dangers and difficulties thou meetest with in My way and work, and what losses soever thou sustainest for My sake, believe "I am God all-sufficient." I will sufficiently reward thee, thou shalt be no loser by following and serving Me. Also Moses by his faith had an eye to the recompense of reward. Heb. 11:26. And that you may see that this is not legal

and mercenary, our Lord Jesus proposeth this as an encouragement to His people. Matt. 5:12: "Great is your reward in heaven." And He Himself took encouragement from it, as Heb. 12:1, 2, for the joy that was set before Him, etc.

So that this is to believe in God, to believe that God is really and truly, He is all that He hath revealed Himself to be, and to believe that He is a rewarder, etc. This faith in God, Christ took for granted that His disciples had. Ye believe in God; ye believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; and if ye believe this, let not your hearts be troubled; be not afraid nor dejected, but act your faith in God and seriously consider what God this is in whom you believe; and believing also your interest in that God, that He is your God, this God all-sufficient is your God, you will have no cause to be troubled.

#### *How faith in God prevents heart trouble*

Your acting of faith on God, your God, will prevent and cure your heart trouble, and that these several ways.

##### *D.1c1 First, more generally.*

He that believes in God as his God, believes God is always present with him according to His promises. In the worst times God is present with His people. And can there be any cause of heart trouble to such souls as have always the presence of God with them, whose presence makes heaven, and in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore? Psa. 16:11. Surely, beloved, this will prevent heart trouble when a soul can act his faith and firmly believe it. God is always present with His people, and that for gracious purposes (and not as a bare spectator), as to proportion and measure out their afflictions to them, that they may not be above their strength, nor more than need. 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Pet. 1:6. All the afflictions of God's people are measured by the hand of the most wise, most merciful, and gracious God. All the malice of men and devils cannot add a drachma to the weight, nor a drop to the measure beyond God's appointment. He is present to order and fix the time of our sufferings, it is an hour of temptation. Rev. 2:10. It is our loving Father that sets up the glass of the time of our troubles. He appoints their beginning, their duration, their end. He holds the glass in His own hand. All the powers on earth cannot bring trouble on us till the hour come, till the appointed time, nor continue our troubles longer than His time. "The rod of the wicked shall not rest on the lot of the righteous." Psa. 125:3.

God is present to mix some comforts with the cross, thereby to allay the bitterness of it, present to support the soul with inward strength. Psa. 138:3. "Thou strengthenest me with strength in my soul"; present to sanctify afflictions for good, and at length in His good time, which is the best time, when He hath perfected His own work in His people, He is present for their deliverance.

A true believer in God hath always a God to go unto. Oh, what a comfort, what a happiness is that! He dwells in the love of God as well in affliction as out of it. He may be cast out of his happy condition in the world, but never out of the favor of his God. This believed by us will cure heart sorrow, heart fear, heart care, all despondency, dejectedness, disquietness and distractions whatever. Faith acted on God, the Almighty, all-sufficient and our God, always present with us, is the sovereign antidote against, and the best cure of all heart trouble. Psa. 142:1-4, there are the Psalmist's troubles; and verse 5, there is his cure: "I cried unto thee, O Lord, thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living." So, Psa. 143:4, 6, 8, his spirit was overwhelmed with trouble, but he cried to God and trusted Him, and that was his relief. His trusting God was a high exercise of his faith. This kept David from sinking under his great distress. 1 Sam. 30:6: He encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Thus in general.

##### *D.1c2 Second, more particularly.*

I shall endeavor to show what there is in God that a believer's faith fetcheth virtue from to cure his heart trouble in his greatest distress, even under the loss of the personal presence of his best and dearest friends on earth; for such was like to be the case of the disciples in the text.

*First*, that in God which faith looks unto and fetcheth comfort from, is *His sweet and gracious nature*. God is love, the very element of love, 1 John 4:16, and His gracious name, which discovers His nature; Exod. 34:6: The Lord gracious and merciful. When He gives to His people He gives in love; when He takes, He takes in love. Now when a soul believes that all is from love, and all in love, he is supported. When a man can believe that all his troubles come to him from the Father of mercies, and his Father in Christ, he cannot but bear them patiently. "Ye believe in God," said Christ, ye believe that God loves you, therefore, "Let not your heart be troubled."

Q. But how shall I know that God loves me when He afflicts me?

I answer, When we can discern that we have received any spiritual benefit by any affliction, we may certainly conclude that the love of God was in that affliction. Fury is not in God towards His people. Isa. 27:4. And He intends nothing but our profit. All His ends are for our good, to purge away our sins, to wean us from the world, to draw us nearer to Himself, to humble us, to try us, to conform us to Christ, to prepare us for glory, etc. Now seeing God's ends are so much for our good, we must conclude that all our afflictions proceed from His love; and when we find any of those ends

accomplished in us, and on us, and that we have received real spiritual good by them, we ought to be strengthened in our belief that God hath corrected us in love, so that faith acted on the love of God in our affliction, will prevent or cure our heart trouble. Our Lord told His disciples that the Father had loved them. Jn. 16:27.

*Secondly, faith acted upon God's glorious attributes, will fortify against heart trouble.*

First, upon His all-sufficiency. Ye believe that God is all-sufficient in and of Himself alone, every way able to supply all wants, to make up and repair all losses, to satisfy all desires, to sustain under all burdens, and that without all earthly comforts. For how else are the saints in heaven happy, who have none of these earthly enjoyments? Ye believe this, act your faith on it. He must needs be all-sufficient who made the world and all things in it, and upholds it to this day. He that owns all things, and is possessor of heaven and earth, He it is that is your God, your Father. Act your faith on Him and be comforted.

Secondly, He is almighty. You believe this. So Christ hath told His disciples, "All things are possible to God." He can break the hardest heart and bind up the broken spirit. He can make up the greatest loss. We are kept by the mighty power of God. 1 Pet. 1:5. Oh, how safe is that man that is in the love and covenant, and that lies in the arms and bosom of the Almighty God. Deut. 33:27. He can bring light out of darkness, and make the greatest loss to prove the greatest gain. He hath the keys of the grave, to Him belongs the issues from death. All power belongeth to Him; nothing is too hard for Him.

Thirdly, His absolute sovereignty and supremacy. All souls are His. Ezek. 18:4. He gives, He takes, who can hinder Him? May He not do with His own what pleaseth Him? Ye believe this. Hath He not a right in all the works of His hands, and may He not dispose of all as He will?

Fourthly, His unchangeableness. God is in one mind. Job 23:13, 14. The thoughts of His heart stand to all generations. He sets bounds to the sea, to the life of man, and to all the comforts of life the number of His thoughts is with God. Job 14:5. Believe this.

Fifthly, His wisdom. God is only wise, the fountain of wisdom. He doth all He doth in infinite wisdom. He is wise in heart and worketh all things according to the counsel of His will. He knows what is best for us; when to give, when to take, and what will do us most good. Believe this, and "let not your heart be troubled."

Sixthly, His righteousness. All His ways are just and equal. Yea, when clouds and darkness are round about Him (His providences towards us dark), yet then "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." God, the judge of the world can do no wrong. Believe this of God and it will quiet your minds.

Lastly, His faithfulness. "In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me," saith holy David. Psa. 119:75. He hath promised, He will withhold no good thing from His people. Now He sees and knows that afflictions are good for them, good for their souls, His daily rod as good for their souls as His daily bread is for their bodies. Therefore He brings afflictions on them, and so makes good his promise to them. Oh believe this and "let not your heart be troubled." Certainly, faith acted on God's attributes will support under the greatest strokes, and most grievous losses.

*Thirdly, Faith acted on the covenant of grace.*

God's everlasting covenant will help to support under trouble. Ye believe in God, that God hath made a covenant with you, to become your God. Jer. 31:33, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." This is infinitely more, for God to become our God, to give Himself to us, than if He had said, I will give you crowns and kingdoms, sons and daughters. When God saith, "I will be your God," He saith I will be all that to you, and I will do all that for you, and bestow all that upon you which a God can be, or do, and which shall make you most happy forever. I will pardon your sins; I will give you new hearts, give you My Spirit. I will give you grace here and glory hereafter. This acting of faith in God's covenant supported David in his greatest troubles. 2 Sam. 23:5, a notable text. When the Lord had made breach upon breach in his family, this comforted him, "that God had made with him an everlasting covenant." That he was in covenant with God; that God was his God in covenant; this balanced all his losses, and repaired all the breaches made in his relations. Though his family was wasted and blasted, this answered all, that "he was in covenant with God."

This is the language of faith. If God be my God, if I be His child, born of Him, reconciled to Him, pardoned, justified, sanctified, in covenant with Him, why am I troubled, though He give me neither health, nor wealth, nor friends, nor relations? Have not I enough, in having God to be my God? Is not God more than all? But if God be not my God, I have cause enough to be troubled then, considering the danger I am in; and my trouble for this should swallow up all other trouble. For surely, either God is mine in covenant, or He is not. If He is mine in covenant, then, though He break my family, make breaches upon all my earthly comforts, yet, He will not break His covenant, Psa. 89:32, and so long I am well enough. If He leave me neither son nor daughter, if He strip me of friends, estate, liberty, health, etc., yet he remains my God still; and so long it is well enough. It cannot be ill with a man so long as God is his. Ye believe this.

*Fourthly, Faith acted upon the word of God will support the soul.*

Ye believe God's word, the word of truth. Psa. 119:50, "This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me." So, v. 92, "Had not thy law been my delight, I had perished in my affliction."

First, Consider the word of precept. As in the text, it is Christ's command, "Let not your heart be troubled." Many such commands we have in Scripture, as not to fear, not to be cast down, sorrow not as those that have no hope, 1 Thess. 4:13, 14, and such like. Now faith applies such commands to the soul. I must not be troubled in my heart. God forbids it. Why must we not profane the sabbath, nor swear, nor lie, etc., but because God hath forbidden these evils? So here, God hath forbidden us to be troubled, and commanded us to be quiet, patient, contented, submissive to His will in all His dealings. Thus we should urge God's command on our souls. Yea, we are commanded to be so far from troubling ourselves when afflictions befall us, as that we must "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations." Jas. 1:12. And to rejoice in sufferings; for "blessed is the man that endureth temptation." Jas. 1:12.

Secondly, Consider the word of promise. Many exceeding great and precious promises are in the word of God, which are a full feast for faith to feed upon. God promiseth to be "our God, to be with us in the fire, and in the water." Isa. 41:10; 43:2. To support and sustain us, "to lay no more upon us than he will enable us to bear." 1 Cor. 10:13. That "all things shall work together for good." Rom. 8:28. And what can we desire more? There is no trouble that can befall us but we may find a promise suitable to it. And "faithful is he that promised, who also will do it." 1 Thess. 5:23. And why hath the great God so wonderfully condescended to poor creatures, as to make so many promises which are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, but for this, that "the heirs of promise might have strong consolation," Heb. 6:17, and that their hearts might not be troubled?

Thirdly, The word of threatening. Matt. 10:37, "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, (so husband or wife) more than me is not worthy of me," saith Christ. Now by our immoderate sorrow for the loss of these, we manifest our immoderate love of these. We should consider that when these are removed, that Christ remains ours still, and with us still. Our relation to Him is not broken; and Christ will be instead of all and better than all to us, and this should keep us from heart trouble.

Fourth, The examples of God's saints in the word. We should consider also what a famous example is Abraham, who was content to part with his Isaac at the command of God; his only son, the son of his old age, the son of the promise, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; yea, content to lay his own hands upon him, to slay him, and burn him. But when he was tried, God spared him. Gen. 22:12. The way to keep our earthly comforts is to be willing to part with them when God calls for them. So Eli, when very sad tidings were told him, "It is the Lord," said he, "let him do what seemeth him good." 1 Sam. 3:18. So Aaron, when that heavy stroke fell upon him, that both his sons were struck dead upon the place for their sin, and it may be in their sin too. It is said, "Aaron held his peace." Lev. 10:3. So Job, stripped of all his friends at once. "The breath of his wife was strange to him." And David complained that "lover and friend was put far from him." Now we should consider these examples, and set faith a-work on them and know that it is our duty "to be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Heb. 6:12.

Fifthly, The word of experience. David tells us his experience, and saith, "It was good for him that he had been afflicted." And many Christians living can and do bless God for their afflictions, and that God, by taking away of their relations from them, He made more room in their hearts for Himself, and communicated more of Himself to their souls. Thus by acting of faith upon the word of God, we may gain support, and be preserved from heart trouble.

*Fifthly, Faith acted upon the work of God will support under heart trouble.*

Ecl. 7:13, "Consider the work of God." Faith looks to the work of God; who it is that killeth, who it is that taketh away. Who can stop, or mend, or hinder His work? This disquieted David's heart when the stroke of God was heavy upon him. "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." Psa. 39:9. It is the Lord. He hath done it. It is He that doth whatsoever He pleaseth.

*Sixthly, Faith acted on the will of God.*

Faith resigns up all to the good and holy will of God. So did our Lord Himself. "Not my will but thine be done." Lk. 22:42. And so we pray continually, "Thy will be done" and therefore when it is done our hearts must not be troubled.

*Lastly, faith acted on the gracious ends and designs of God in afflicting us, and removing our earthly comforts from us, will prevent heart trouble.*

God hath holy and good ends which faith looks unto. God aims at our profit, as Heb. 12:10. Such ends as these:

1. God's end is to discover and purge away our sins. Isa. 27:9, "By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged. This is all the fruit to take away his sin."

2. To try and exercise our graces, Job 23:6, 10; 1 Pet. 1:7.



3. To crucify our hearts unto and to estrange our affections from the things of this world.

4. To draw our hearts nearer to Himself. Therefore many times God takes away our earthly comforts from us, because they had too much of our hearts, and because they lay between God and our hearts, and kept us at a distance from Him.

5. To bestow greater, and better mercies upon us. God never takes away any darling comfort from His people but His design is to give a better in the room of it, as in the text. Christ leaves His disciples, in regard to His bodily presence, because He would send the Comforter to them, which should abide with them forever. John 14:16.

6. To make them partakers of his holiness. Heb. 12:10.

7. To fit and prepare them for that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. 2 Cor. 4:17. These are God's only and good ends in afflicting His people, unto which faith looks, and so supports the heart.

Thus you see how faith acted on God in these particulars will prevent or cure all our heart trouble. Faith acted on the sweet and gracious nature of God; He is love, all love; on His glorious attributes, His all-sufficiency, His omnipotency, His absolute sovereignty, unchangeableness, His wisdom, His righteousness, His faithfulness; faith acted on God's gracious everlasting covenant, on the word of God, on the word of precept, of promise, of threatening, of example, of experience. And faith acted on the work of God, on the will of God and on His holy ends in all His chastisements. I say, faith thus acted on God will exceedingly support under all trouble. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God." So much of this first particular.

#### *D.1d Application*

Before I enter upon the second head, I shall make some short application of this:

First, It follows hence that heart trouble under the afflicting hand of God, argues the weakness, if not the want of faith. All those sorts of heart trouble, and the parts of it which I have mentioned, as heart sorrow, worldly sorrow, immoderate mourning, sinful fear, vexatious care, despondency of spirit, being offended, disturbance of mind, distraction, dejection, discouragement, and the like, all these flow from the want of faith, or at least from the weakness of faith in God. We do not believe in God. We see the causes of our troubles. They are mostly in ourselves, even our unbelief. Whatever we profess, we do not believe in God. If we could but believe in God, our hearts would not be troubled. Oh our want of faith; let us heartily lament it and cry to God for pardon through the blood of Christ. If our hearts be troubled, where is our faith in God? What doth God, and all that is in God, signify to us? What are we the better for all that infinite all-sufficiency and goodness that is in God, if we do not act faith upon it? Our heart troubles would be cured could we act faith on God as we ought to do.

Immoderate sorrow, then, is very unbecoming believers in God. If we will prove ourselves believers in God, let us discharge ourselves from heart trouble, and let us draw out consolation for our hearts by faith, from all those comfortable considerations of God, and from all those abundant excellencies that are in God. O let us labor for faith, and act it. Let us live in the exercise of it, and then surely we shall find comfort.

Secondly, Let us all labor to get an interest in God, by faith in Jesus Christ, that so we may be able to look upon God as our God, and then we may claim an interest in all that God is, and in all that God hath, and so shall we have no cause of heart trouble in any condition. For if God be ours, all his attributes are ours, His gracious covenant is ours, His word and promises are ours. All is ours. Therefore should we labor in this above all things, spending all our thoughts, affections, and spirits upon this. O let us lay hold on God and His covenant. Let us choose Him for our portion, and resign up our whole selves unfeignedly to Him, terminating and centering all our desires, hope, love, delight in Him alone, placing all our happiness in Him, and then commit all to Him. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Psa. 73:23.

#### ***D.2 What is it to believe in Christ? "Believe also in me."***

Secondly, What is it to believe in Christ? For, saith He in the text, "Believe also in me." It is God in Christ that we must believe in; not in God without Christ, not in God out of Christ, but believe in God in Christ.

Now what this believing in Christ is, I shall endeavor to show, looking up to the Father of lights and to the author and finisher of our faith for light and assistance.

#### *D.2a Believing all which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures concerning Christ*

In general, it is to believe all that which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures concerning Christ, to believe the record that God hath given of Him in His word, as 1 Jn. 5:10-13. To believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, Jn. 1:18. That He came out from the Father; was made flesh; took upon Him our nature; was born of a virgin; lived on earth in the form of a servant, a poor despicable life; preached the gospel, working miracles, etc. That He suffered upon the cross with all

the sins of His people upon His soul and body; that He bore the curse of the law, the wrath of God which was due to man for sin; that He died a most painful, shameful, and cruel death, dying as a sacrifice, to satisfy God's justice, to atone and pacify His wrath, to make our peace, and to reconcile us to God; that He rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven to prepare a place there for His people; that He sitteth at the right hand of God everlasting, to make continual intercession for us; and that He shall come to judge the world at the last day; and while He is absent from us in person here on earth, He promised to send His Spirit the Comforter into the world, to convince and convert all those which His Father hath given Him, to call them by His word, to quicken, strengthen, stablish, comfort, and confirm them until He comes again "to take them to Himself, that where He is they may be also." John 16:1, 2. This is the record that God hath given of His Son: "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Jn. 3:16, 36. Now, to believe in Christ is to believe all this testimony of Him. And also, out of a deep sense of our sin and misery, and sight of Christ's infinite excellency, all-sufficiency, and willingness to save sinners; and upon His call to us in the gospel, to come unto Him weary and heavy laden with our sins, heartily willing to accept of the Lord Jesus upon His own terms, to take Him for our only Lord, to give up our whole selves, souls and bodies to His blessed government by His word and Spirit in all things, and unfeignedly and unreservedly to enter into covenant with Him, to become His, and His alone, and His forever; and to rely upon Him for life, for grace, and salvation; this is to believe in Christ. Thus believe in Christ and "let not your heart be troubled." The acting of this faith on blessed Jesus is a singular means to prevent and cure all heart trouble, all heart sorrows, cares, fears, vexations, despondencies, dejections, and distractions whatsoever that may arise in our hearts by reason of any loss, cross, disappointment, distress, or affliction that may befall us. If we can but thus believe in Christ, and rest and rely upon Him, and trust in Him, our hearts shall not be troubled.

*D.2b What is that in Christ which faith must act upon?*

Question: But what is that in Christ which faith must act upon, to effect this cure of heart trouble when afflictions come upon us?

Answer: Such like things (as I showed before) as are in God for faith to act upon, which are these that follow:

*D.2b1 The sweet nature of Christ*

First, Faith must be acted upon the loving, gracious, sweet nature of Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus is of a most loving and sweet nature. He is love indeed, the Son of His Father's love and altogether lovely. His thoughts of us who believe in Him were thoughts of love from everlasting. All His words are sweet. His mouth is most sweet. O what sweet language doth He give His church! "My dove, my love, my fair one, my sister, my spouse," etc. Cant. 5:16. "He loved us, and gave himself for us and washed us in his blood." Rev. 1:6. He is one of our nature, our kinsman, our husband, our father, our elder brother, etc. So that if there be any love in the head to the members, if any in the father to the child, if any in the husband to the wife, or in any near and dear relations, then sure there is love, strong love in Jesus Christ to all believers; for in Him is the love of all relations and therefore He expresseth it under all these relations. He calls us His friends. He is of a most tender, a most merciful nature, full of bowels of compassion and of tender mercies. It would be endless to express the loving nature of Jesus Christ to poor believers; which when a believer duly considers, ponders upon, and acteth faith upon, it cannot but support him under heart trouble.

Act your faith on Christ as yours, your Jesus, He that died for you, He that sweated great drops of blood for you in the garden, wrestling and grappling with His Father's wrath for you in your name and stead there, and upon the cross. Consider, that this your dearest Jesus, now in glory, knows your souls in adversity; He seeth all the trouble of your hearts. He sympathizeth with you in your afflictions. His heart, now in heaven, "is touched with the feeling of your infirmities" on earth. Heb. 4:15. He hath human nature still, though glorified. He feels our losses, crosses, griefs, pains, and sorrows. His heart, His most tender heart, is affected. Oh that we could but believe this! and thus consider with ourselves: Here I sit solitary as a widow, or a widower, or childless, or fatherless, or motherless, or friendless; my family is broken; I feel pains and sickness; I am deprived of my liberty, my sweet relations and comfortable friends are laid in the dust; I have none about me to counsel or comfort me; I am brought low in the world; my estate is diminished, my honor and reputation lost, my pleasure gone, my flesh faileth me, my strength faileth, lovers and friends fail me, etc. Such complaints we are apt enough to make, and it may be worse than these: My God hath forsaken me, He hides His face from me; I am compassed about with temptations, sad dejecting and distracting thoughts; I am persecuted, banished from house and home, all my outward and inward comforts fail me. These have been the cases and conditions of God's dearest servants, as Job, David, Heman, and others; but yet let not your hearts be troubled for all this. "Ye believe in God," act your faith on God, yea, and act it on Christ also: believe in Jesus, look up by faith unto Jesus your dear Lord. Whatsoever, whomsoever you have lost, you have not lost your Jesus, your best Friend, your heavenly Husband. You have His eye, His tender watchful provident eye upon you still. You have His ear, open to your cries still. Yea, you have His everlasting arms underneath you to sustain you still, for else you would sink. Oh then, act faith upon the sweet nature of Christ as your Head and Husband. "Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" Isa. 49:15.

Possibly she may. But can Jesus forget those whom He died for, and travailed for? No, no, He will not hide His face forever. He will never forget His people. Your maker is your Husband; and He is the Father of Mercies.

If we read these things, or hear them read, and do not apply them to our own souls by faith; if we do not meditate on them, and let them sink down into our hearts, if we do not pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit would bring them home, and lay them close to and fix them on our hearts, they will do us no good, yield us no comfort; therefore meditate on them and apply them.

*D.2b2 The precious attributes of Christ*

Secondly, We must act faith upon the many precious attributes of Jesus Christ; all which will afford to faith much matter of support under all our heart troubles whatever. And these are exceeding many. I shall mention only some.

First, Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father. 1 Jn. 2:1, 2. One that undertaketh for us to plead our cause in that highest court of heaven. If a man be sued in law, or be accused of any crime in any court, it is a great privilege to have a solicitor there for him, that is skillful and faithful, and powerful with the judge in that court. Jesus Christ is such an advocate, or solicitor, for us in heaven. He will plead our cause, and He is wise. He is the wisdom of the Father. He is a great counsellor and the only counsellor; none else can plead in that high court. And He is most faithful. He is a "merciful and faithful high priest in all things pertaining to God." Heb. 2:17. He appears for us in heaven. Heb. 9:24. When a man is indicted in a court and hath none to appear for him there, he is in a bad case. But all poor believers are in a better case. They have a blessed advocate to appear in the presence of God for them. He continually presents His blood, His sacrifice to the Father for them. Heb. 10:10. And it is His will to have that sacrifice accepted for our justification and sanctification. Christ prevails so with His Father that He always heareth Him. Jn. 11:43. Now if we can act faith on this blessed advocate in heaven, who is there always pleading for us, ever living to make continual intercession for us, Rom. 3:25, presenting Himself before God as our sacrifice and propitiation: when men accuse us, and our own consciences too; when we are deprived of our near and dear relations, distressed with pains and sicknesses, pinched with wants and necessities; I say, then, for us to act our faith on this precious advocate at the right hand of God for us, interceding there for us, one who knows and feels all our misery, it must needs be a great support and relief to us, and the best remedy against our heart troubles. Oh that we could act faith strongly on this our Advocate.

To have a friend in heaven, and such a friend, so wise, so powerful, so faithful, so merciful, so sensibly affected with all our misery, so tender, so able, and so willing to hear and help us; I say, this is infinitely better than all the friends that ever we had, or could have on earth. And this Friend ever liveth and maketh continual intercession for us. And as this is matter of comfort in case of suffering, so in case of sin too. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." 1 Jn. 2:1, 2. Faith acted on this blessed advocate, is the best remedy against heart trouble.

Secondly, Jesus Christ is bread from heaven; the true bread for souls, the bread of life, the water of life. Jn. 6:35, 48, 51. Now when poor saints are fed with the bread of affliction, and with the water of adversity, let them look up to Christ and act faith upon Him. He will be living bread, life-giving bread, living waters to their souls, to revive their drooping, and to refresh their fainting spirit. By acting faith on this blessed Jesus, the fountain of living waters, their souls shall be so satisfied as that they shall never hunger more, never thirst more (that is, inordinately) after the things of this world. When your souls want strength to bear your burdens, want comfort in your distresses, act faith on this Jesus, this water of life, and you shall be refreshed; you shall have joy and peace in believing. Rom. 15:13.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ is called "the Sun of righteousness and the bright morning-star." Mal. 4:3; Rev. 22:16. He is the fountain of righteousness and life, as the sun is of light. He hath healing in His wings. "He was wounded for our transgressions, that by his stripes we might be healed." Isa. 53:4,5 and 61:1, 2. He was appointed to heal the broken hearted. Lk. 4. "He will heal our backslidings." Hos. 14:4. He is the great physician. He can heal our spiritual and corporeal diseases. His blood is a healing blood; His spirit a healing spirit; His word a healing word; His promises healing promises. He hath all healing virtue in Him. He is the true brazen serpent. Could we but act faith on this Jesus, we should be healed of all our diseases. He is the bright morning-star. We are in darkness, clouds and darkness upon our spirits; many dark providences befall us. We see not our way many times, know not what to do. Now let us act faith on Jesus. He will bring light out of darkness. We are under black fears and sorrows and all dark night sometimes with us. But if we can look up to this bright Morning-Star, He will enlighten our darkness; He will shine in upon our hearts and scatter all those clouds and give us a joyful morning.

Fourthly, Jesus Christ is called the "Captain of the Lord's hosts, and the Captain of our salvation." Job 5:24. Heb. 2:10. He hath the command of all the creatures, for He is Head over all things, Eph. 1:22, over men and devils; all power in heaven and earth is His. Matt. 28:18. Oh if we could act faith on this almighty Jesus, our hearts would not be troubled for anything. What can hurt us? What should we fear? Our blessed Jesus, our Savior, our Husband, commands all things. He rules, and over-rules all things. No creature, no man, no devil can act anything against us without our Lord's leave.

Believe in this Captain and let not your heart be troubled. "He will tread Satan under your feet shortly." Rom. 16:20. He will make all His and our enemies His footstool. Let us look by faith unto our Captain, and keep our eye on Him and follow Him wheresoever He goeth. Let us make Him our Leader, and by faith in Him we shall be more than conquerors. He hath overcome the devil and the world for us, and He will overcome all our corruptions, fears, and sorrows in us; and will shortly set His crown upon our heads. Christ is the Captain of our salvation; and in bringing of many sons to glory He was made perfect through suffering. Heb. 2:14. John 16: last. Act faith in Him who hath perfected our salvation for us. That work is done, and was through suffering to teach us to be willing to suffer also; to walk in His steps. For in the way of suffering He entered into His glory. And the very same way will He bring all His sons and daughters unto glory; so that while we are suffering for Him, or from Him, if we be His children we are in the right and ready way to glory. And then have we any cause to let our hearts be troubled with sinful fears, cares, and sorrows? Have we any cause to be cast down and discouraged while we are following our Captain, are making conformable to Him, traveling the same way to heaven that He went thither, the same way to glory, the way of reproach, shame, grief, sorrow, fear, poverty, persecution, tribulation, desertion, the same steps that our Lord went to glory? Oh that we could but still keep our eye on Jesus, and often consider what way He went to heaven; and being our Captain, we should show ourselves His good soldiers and be content to go the same way.

Fifthly, Jesus Christ is called the "consolation of Israel," Lk. 2:25, a sweet name indeed. He is the only person that brings true comfort, being the fountain of the spring of all consolation; that one of a thousand who gave Himself a ransom for us. He it is that "comforteth His people in all their tribulations." 2 Cor. 1:3, 4. He it is that speaketh and giveth His peace to His people; and when He giveth peace, none can cause trouble. And it is His promise that when He hath brought His people into the wilderness of fears and troubles, that they know not which way to turn, that then He will speak comfortably to them, will speak to their hearts. Hos. 2:14.

I might largely show here that Jesus Christ is the consolation of His people many ways; as, by His coming from His Father into the world to become our surety, to undertake for us, to take our sins upon Him, and to make His soul an offering for our sins, and by His blood to purchase our remission. Eph. 1:7. Oh how comfortable is a surety to one that is arrested, indicted, and arraigned! How comfortable is a Redeemer to a poor miserable captive! How comfortable is a pardon to a condemned malefactor! All this is Jesus to His people, and infinitely more. He is gold to make us rich, white raiment to cover our nakedness, eye-salve to make us see. Rev. 3:17, 18. He is light, Jn. 5:12, the life of life, the fountain of life, of spiritual and eternal life; no life but by Him. And He hath assured us that whosoever cometh to Him, and believeth in Him, shall have everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation. He is "afflicted in all our afflictions." Isa. 63:9. And is not this a comfortable consideration? All His promises are so many breasts of consolation, all His ordinances means of consolation; His word a word of consolation; yea, His rod of affliction, as well as His staff, is blessed for the comfort of His people. Psa. 23. He hath also promised to send His Spirit, the Comforter, to His people, "to abide with them for ever." Jn. 16:7. Yea, Christ Himself makes this His own special work also, to "comfort them that mourn," Isa. 61:2, and hath "blessed those that mourn," Matt. 5:4, that is, with godly sorrow, for, saith He, "they shall be comforted."

How greatly then doth it concern us to believe in this Jesus, the consolation of Israel, to look by faith to this fountain of comfort, to look to His office, look to His word and promise; beg Him earnestly to send the Spirit, the Comforter, into your hearts. Look to Jesus alone for all comfort, and draw from this spring by prayer, faith, and meditation all supplies of comfort; and "let not your heart be troubled."

Sixthly, Jesus Christ is called a "counsellor." Isa. 9:6. He is most wise; he is the "wisdom of the Father. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. 2:3. Yea, He is made of God our wisdom. 1 Cor. 1:30. So that when we are in doubts and darkness, perplexed with temptations, and know not what to do; when we are under sad and dark providences and know not how to interpret them; when we are under various exercises, and know not how to answer God's ends in them, nor how to improve them; when we are in the dark, and know not the meaning of God's dispensations, nor the design of God in them: now are our hearts troubled in all such cases; but here is our remedy. This is the course we must take: act faith now upon Jesus. He is wisdom. He is a most wise and faithful counsellor. We may freely open all our cases and conditions to Him. He will not betray us, nor bewray us; we may safely trust Him with all the secrets of our hearts. And let us labor by faith to trust Him for counsel in all cases. Let us wait for His counsel, trust to it, and let not our hearts be troubled.

Seventhly, Jesus is a Redeemer. That is His name. He came into the world on this very business to redeem His people, to redeem them from all iniquity, Tit. 2:14, "from this present evil world: from our vain conversations." He hath shed His precious blood to purchase us. "We are bought with a price." 1 Cor. 6:20. We are none of our own, we are His, the purchase of His blood; and we may be confident that He dearly loves us, for He dearly bought us; and if He had not dearly loved us, He would never have given Himself for us. Gal. 2:20. That was the highest testimony of His love. "He loved us,

and washed us from our sins in his blood." Rev. 1:6. He will redeem us from the wrath to come. Oh then let us act faith on our sweet Redeemer, as Job did in the midst of all his troubles. "I know," saith he, "that my Redeemer liveth," etc. So may every believer say, although my friends and dearest relations die, my credit and estate dies; though my outward comforts all die, this supports me, that my Redeemer liveth, and this our Redeemer is mighty, mighty to save, able to save to the uttermost. Heb. 7:25.

Therefore let us act faith on our dear Redeemer and upon His redemption; and let us believe that shortly the day of our redemption will come when we shall be delivered fully and forever from sin, Satan, and the world; from all our burdens, fears, and sorrows, temptations and tribulations.

I might mention many other sweet names and titles of Jesus Christ which would be food for faith to feed upon; as, that He is the "everlasting Father." Isa. 9:6. He hath pity and compassion for all His poor children, and power to help them, being the Father Almighty, and hath a portion for them too; He is their portion and hath provided for them "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." 1 Pet. 1:4. He is the Prince of peace; He giveth His peace to His people, even that peace that the world can neither give to them, nor take from them. When He speaks peace, none can cause trouble. He is our peace and hath made our peace with God; and it is He alone that speaketh peace, and creates the fruit of the lips, peace. Isa. 57:19. He is also our shepherd, therefore (said David) I shall want nothing. Psa. 23:1. He is a fountain opened, a fountain of light, life, love, grace and truth. He is the head of His body the church; the Husband, the Bridegroom, His people are His members, His spouse. He is the "heir of all things." Heb. 1:2. In Him dwelleth all fullness. He is the King of saints, the Rock of Ages. Yea, He is all and in all. Oh beloved, had we but faith to act on this blessed Jesus, and on these His most sweet names and gracious attributes, our hearts would not be troubled into what condition soever we were brought. Could we act faith on Jesus as our Head, Husband and Father who is all fullness, all in all, could we doubt of having all seasonable supplies from Him? Let our faith but apprehend, apply, and appropriate Jesus as our blessed head, our most dear husband, and then consider in earnest who He is and what He is: how mighty, how full, loving, pitiful, compassionate, tender-hearted and kind; how ready to help, how engaged to us by many promises, and can we then take up such unworthy thoughts of Him as to think He hath forgotten us? Will He not timely support and supply us? Hath He shed His blood for us, and will He forget us? Are not all His people as dear to Him as "the apple of his eye"? Zech. 2:8. Surely it is our want, or the weakness of our faith, that causeth all our heart: trouble. "O my poor soul, how comfortably mightest thou live, if thou couldst live by faith? Lord, I believe, help, strengthen my faith." Could we but apply and appropriate Christ to our souls and act faith upon those precious names of Christ, which are not as so many empty titles which are sometimes given to men, but they are real representation of that most dear love and tender affection of that special care, mercy, and loving-kindness that is in Jesus towards all His poor children, that they might draw out the same for their strong consolation; and that they might trust in Him, and not despond nor be dejected. Thus, if we can believe in Jesus, our hearts shall not be troubled.

#### *D.2b3 The covenant of grace*

Thirdly, Faith acted on the covenant of grace, whereof Christ is the Mediator, and upon all His exceeding great and precious promises, will prevent and cure all heart trouble. Believe in the blessed Mediator of the new covenant, who hath undertaken, not only on God's part to see that His part be performed to us, but also is become our surety; undertaking for us, and by Himself, to fulfill the whole law of God both actively and passively; "to fulfill all righteousness" for us, and by His Spirit to enable us to fulfill the conditions of the covenant, working in us faith, love, obedience and all grace.

In this sense God hath given Christ to be a covenant to us, Isa. 42:6, and His blood is the blood of the covenant, by which He rescueth poor souls that were prisoners to sin and Satan, out of the pit of destruction. Zech. 9:11. By this covenant, upon Christ's shedding of His blood as a sacrifice for sin, and His performing all the work of mediation, and upon our receiving of Him, and believing in Him, as He is offered to us in the Gospel, God is pleased to promise to become our God, our reconciled Father, to pardon all our sins, to give us His Spirit and all grace here, and glory hereafter. Now Christ, our blessed Mediator, hath perfectly fulfilled all that God required for us, and in our room and stead. That is most certain, for He finished the work that His Father gave Him to do; and He hath made many sweet promises to us that He will send the Spirit into our hearts to work faith in us, to receive Him, and to apply the merit of His blood to us, to sanctify, and renew us thereby; and hath promised that "whosoever comes unto him, he will in no wise cast out." Matt. 11:28. And all that come unto Him, shall find rest to their souls. "That whosoever believeth in Him shall be saved; He will keep them, and none shall pluck them out of His hand; that He will raise them up at the last day." Jn. 10:28. Assuring us that He is gone to heaven as our fore-runner, to prepare a place for us there, and that He will come again and take us to Himself, that where He is we may be also.

Now, if we can but act faith on this Jesus, and on the covenant whereof He is the Mediator, and on His promises, applying them, and relying on them, our hearts shall not be troubled.

Besides, let us consider there is not a passage of providence from God to us, but it comes through the hand of this Mediator. 1 Cor. 8:6, "All things are by him." Put what you will in the hand of a mediator, and in His power it must needs turn to the good of him for whom He is a mediator. Now to support and comfort us in all our troubles, let us consider two things.

1. This Mediator steps in between God's wrath and us, in all our afflictions, that no fury or effects of it may break forth from God on His people for whom He is the Mediator; that nothing but fatherly love may be in the chastisement, and if love send the affliction, whatever it be, to try and purge, etc., there can be no hurt in that affliction. Again, our Mediator interposeth, either to hold off the smart, or to allay and mitigate it, that it shall not distract, Dan. 3:25, no, nor hurt.

2. He steps in to uphold us and to strengthen our weakness, enabling us to endure. Phil. 4:4, 12, 13. It was the Mediator that did strengthen Paul. "The Lord stood by me, and strengthened me," said he. Faith acted on this blessed Mediator, eyeing Him and believing that our afflictions come through His hands, even His who loved us and died for us, our dearest friend, and who hath all power in heaven and earth, must be a mighty support to us in all our troubles.

#### *D.2b4 The word of Christ*

Fourthly, Let faith be acted on the word of Christ also. Ye believe the word of God, believe the word of Christ also. "His mouth is most sweet"; none but gracious words proceed out of His mouth. "Grace was poured into His lips." Psa. 45:2. And He poured out grace in all His words; His whole gospel is a gospel of grace, words of peace and salvation. Hear Him speaking most sweetly, Matt. 11:28, "Come unto me, all that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Oh what sweet words are these! "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and drink, without money and without price." Isa. 55:1, 2. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jn. 14:6. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3:18. This is but a taste of those sweet clusters of most refreshing grapes which hang upon the boughs of the gospel; let us take frequent view of what lies upon record in the evangelists, and often read over the manifold promises of grace that fell from the sweet mouth of our blessed Lord, and meditate and ponder and consider of them, and act our faith upon them, and we shall find comfort in them. His words drop as a honeycomb. His words are spirit and life. More particularly,

First, Our faith must be acted upon Christ's word of precept, His word of command in time of trouble. "Fear not him that can kill the body, but him that can cast both soul and body into hell." Lk. 12:4, 32. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." "Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid." "Rejoice when men shall persecute you." Lk. 21:19. "In patience possess ye your souls," with many such.

Now Christians must yield up the obedience of faith to such commands, and urge them upon their hearts, charging themselves to obey, saying, O my soul, my Lord hath forbidden me to fear, to be troubled, to be thoughtful, to be dejected, etc. He hath commanded me to be patient, yea, to rejoice in my suffering. He is my Lord and I must obey Him. I must keep His commandments, else I cannot love Him. I must keep His sayings, or else I cannot be His disciple. If I keep His commandments, He will manifest Himself to my soul. His Father will love me and He will love me, and they both will make their abode with me; for it is His promise. Jn. 14:21, 23. Say thus, O my soul, Jesus Christ is my King and Lawgiver. I must obey him. He is my Prophet also, "and I must hear him in all things whatsoever he shall say unto me." I have taken Him for my Lord as well as for my Savior; my King to rule me, as well as for my Jesus to save me; for my Prophet to teach me, as well as for my Priest to satisfy me. O my soul, consider, "He is the author of eternal salvation only to those that obey him." Thus applying the commands of Christ to ourselves, and urging His authority upon our hearts, it will help us to bear up under our troubles.

Secondly, Act faith upon the promises of Christ, of which somewhat was said before. He hath promised to be always with us, to send the Comforter, to manifest Himself unto us, that He "will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." Matt. 19:29. That He will give us an hundred-fold for all our losses for His sake. That He will gather us with His arm, carry us in His bosom; that He will hear our prayers, that He will give us a crown, a kingdom, everlasting life, with many more. Oh, could we act our faith upon these precious promises, and lie sucking by faith on those full breasts of consolation, and draw by faith, prayer, and meditation from these wells of salvation, we should find sweet support under all our troubles.

Thirdly, Faith acted on the word of threatening, may put a stop to heart trouble. Jesus Christ hath dreadfully threatened those that love father or mother, son or daughter, more than Him, or their own lives; and those that are ashamed of Him, or His word, and those that fall from Him, and those that hear His sayings and do them not; and those that are fruitless branches, etc. Matt. 10:37; Lk. 14:26; Mk. 8: last; Jn. 15:3.

Faith acted on the examples in the word of Christ, especially His own example, "Learn of me," saith He. "I am meek and lowly of heart." Matt. 11:29. He was as a lamb dumb before the shearers, 1 Pet. 1:21, and we must follow His steps. We have also a cloud of witnesses, the examples of the primitive Christians who bore all their troubles with patience and

holy courage, and we are expressly commanded to be followers of them "who through faith and patience inherit the promise." Heb. 6:12. Thus faith acted on the word of Christ will help against all heart trouble.

#### *D.2b5 The work of Christ*

Fifthly, faith acted on the work of Christ will either prevent or cure heart trouble. And that again, if faith be acted upon the work He hath done for us already, and upon the work He is now doing for us in heaven, and upon the work He is now doing in us on earth, and upon the work He will do for us and in us and upon us at the last day. All which works of Christ, if we act our faith on them, we shall not be much troubled in our hearts. Believe also in Christ. "Believe me," saith He, "for the work's sake." John 14:11.

1. Faith must be acted upon that great and glorious work of Christ for us *when He was upon earth*, that work which His Father gave Him to do in the days of His flesh as our Redeemer, and that in doing and in suffering; for He came to do the will of God by His obedience, as well as to suffer it by His satisfaction, and this is His state of humiliation. He assumed human nature, entered the virgin's womb, was born there, "yet without sin." He lived an earth a time, doing good, and healing all manner of diseases. He spent most of His time in preaching, praying, fasting, and revealing to men the whole will of God for their salvation, and fulfilling all righteousness. He professed He "came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him." John 6:38, 39. And, saith He, "this is the Father's will which sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." A comfortable consideration indeed, and a cure for our heart trouble. That our Lord Jesus will raise up all our dead, dear relations and friends, now rotting in their graves; all that died in Jesus will Jesus bring with Him. 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. And this also is the Father's will, that every one that seeth the Son, that is, every one that by faith receiveth and believeth in the Son, shall have everlasting life. Now, to accomplish and finish this will of the Father, was the whole work of Christ upon earth, even to draw poor souls unto Him, to work faith in them by His word and Spirit, to fulfill the whole law of God for them and in them, Rom. 8:4, and to begin and finish the whole work of our redemption. Faith acted on this work of Christ upon earth for us in the several parts of it, He being partaker of flesh and blood with us, to deliver us from him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and to free us from the fear of death, by which we were always subject to bondage, Heb. 2. I say, if we can act faith on these works of Christ for us, we shall have no cause of heart trouble.

1.a Let us consider that our blessed Lord denied Himself on earth, and was well pleased not to have His own will, nor to do His own will, but referred Himself entirely on His Father's, what reason have we, poor worms, to be troubled when our wills are crossed? Let us in heart and life say as we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Matt. 6:10. And when the will of God is done upon our families and relations, let not our hearts be troubled, but let us imitate Jesus Christ in our submission to the will of God, making it our work on earth to be doing the good we can, and so to put Him on, and walking as He walked and not to be troubled.

1.b Secondly, faith acted on Christ's suffering work on earth, will greatly contribute to our support. "He was a man of sorrows." Isa. 53:1, 2, so that if we meet with sorrows on earth, we do but drink of our Master's own cup, and that should quiet us.

Christ's sufferings on earth were of two kinds, viz: for our imitation, and for satisfaction for our sins.

*For our imitation.* His patient suffering of reproaches, scorns, revilings, contradiction of sinners, temptations, persecutions, bonds, poverty, shame, loss of friends, etc., suffering all with invincible patience and meekness, without the least murmuring, repining, disquiet, or discontent, without any retaliation; for when He was reviled, He reviled not again. He prayed for His enemies, etc., and all this as our example, that we should follow in His steps. 1 Pet. 2:21-23. And if our Lord, the Lord of Heaven and earth, suffereth such things, what reason or cause have we to be troubled in our hearts when we are persecuted, reviled, forsaken of all our friends, impoverished, exposed to shame and sorrow, seeing our blessed Lord was so exposed, and so exercised upon earth? Is it not enough for the servant to be as his Master? Shall we think to fare better than Him? His sufferings were to teach us to bear ours with Christian patience, and to sanctify ours to us. Yea, in all our sufferings He sympathizeth with us.

Let us then act our faith upon Christ's sufferings on earth. His whole life being a life of suffering, He knew what trouble meant, He was acquainted with grief, He knew what it was to lose a friend; for in His greatest trouble, all His disciples (whom He called His friends) forsook Him and fled; and "being tempted himself, he knows how to succor them that are tempted." Heb. 2:18, and 4:15. He hath a feeling of all our infirmities. Let us labor to act faith on Jesus, and our hearts will not be troubled.

*But His great suffering work for us was His work of satisfaction.* All our sins being laid on Him, it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, to put Him to grief, and to make His soul an offering for sin. He poured out His soul unto death, was numbered among transgressors, Isa. 53:6, 10, 12, was made sin for us. He bare our sins in His own body on the tree, was made a curse for us. 2 Cor. 5:20; Gal. 3:10; suffered the wrath of God for us, to deliver us from the wrath to come. Oh

blessed Jesus! when our sins were upon Him, He was sore amazed, groaned, was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. He was in a bloody sweat, in a bitter agony in the garden. He was falsely accused, unjustly condemned, and then barbarously crucified, suffering that cursed and cruel, shameful and painful death of the cross, and all as our surety, and as a sacrifice to God for our sins. Christ our passover was sacrificed for us, 1 Cor. 5:7, to make atonement and satisfaction to the law and justice of God for us. Rom. 3:25.

This was the great work of the transcendent love of Jesus Christ when He was upon earth, when He travailed in soul, drank of the brook in the way, Psa. 110:7, that black torrent of wrath and curses that lay in the way betwixt our souls and Heaven, which stopped up our passage thitherward, and made it utterly impassable for us. But Jesus made a passage by His blood, that His redeemed might pass through. So great were His sufferings in this world for us, that they made Him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"; "offering up strong cries with tears." Matt. 27:46; Heb. 5:7.

Therefore, let us act our faith on the sufferings of Christ here on earth, and believe that He suffered all those hard and heavy, those bitter and grievous things for us, and in our names; that He bore our sins to satisfy God's justice for them, to purchase and procure our pardon. O that we could believe in this Jesus, that He sweated great drops of blood for us, and that He shed His very heart's blood upon the cross for us, and by faith apply and appropriate all this to our own souls, believing that He was wounded for our transgressions, smitten for our sins; that the chastisements of our peace was upon Him, Isa. 53; that by the blood of His cross He hath made our peace, and hath purchased for us eternal life. Believe this, and then see what little cause you have to have your hearts troubled for any loss or cross whatever. The consideration, in a way of believing of what Christ hath done for us, and of what He hath suffered for us, should make us patiently do or suffer anything for Him and from Him. "Believe also in me."

2. Secondly, our faith must be acted upon the work of Christ which He is now doing for us in Heaven. He is not idle there, although "He be set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"; but He is at work for His people there. There *He maketh continual intercession for us*, Rom. 8:34. He is there as our advocate to plead our cause, and manage all our business there, presenting His blood in the virtue of it to His Father for our pardon, presenting our persons and services perfumed with the incense of His own righteousness, and by His Spirit applying the virtue of all to our souls. "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Heb. 7:25. Of this I have spoken before. Now if we can act our faith upon the intercession of Christ, who knows all our wants, burdens, cares, and fears, and whose office is to plead and intercede for us in Heaven (though we may scarce have any to plead or speak a word for us on earth), yet we should have no cause to have our hearts troubled. We have a faithful Friend to whom we may commit our cause.

3. Thirdly, Christ is doing a work in us on earth, while He Himself is in Heaven. *He is humbling us, purging us, teaching us, mortifying our corruptions, crucifying our inordinate affections, sanctifying us, and so preparing us for Heaven*. He is making us meet for the kingdom. He is fitting us for His Father's house, by all His ordinances, and by all His providences, by every loss and cross, by all our afflictions, as in 2 Cor. 4:17: "Our light afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us (that is, by the way of preparation) a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Jesus Christ is in the word, and in the rod, He is all in all. He is still forming, squaring, fashioning and working by His Spirit, word, and rod, upon His people to make them more and more comfortable to Himself, to square them as stones for His building, to make them habitations for Himself, temples for the holy God to dwell in, and that He Himself may delight to dwell in them here, and to make them fit to dwell with Him forever in glory. Now let us labor to act our faith on those blessed works of Christ in us, and believe that He is thus working in us, even in and by all our afflictions, and labor to feel and find these gracious works carrying on in us and we shall have no cause to be troubled.

4. Moreover, our faith should be acted upon the work that Christ is now doing for us in Heaven. Besides His intercession for us there, He is *preparing a place for us in Heaven* as He told His disciples to comfort them: "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." A place in Heaven is infinitely better, and more to be desired than the best place on earth. A place in the Father's house, in the highest heavens, in the glorious paradise above, that is the place of all places, there the great and glorious God dwells, there blessed Jesus dwells. Oh, that New Jerusalem, the City of the living God! That's the place indeed, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 Cor. 5:1, 2. Some think that Jesus went locally into hell, but we are sure He went locally into Heaven; and we know for what He went there, for He hath told us, it was to prepare a place for us there. Here below all places are full of darkness, snares, temptations, fears, dangers, persecutions; but that is a place of perfect peace, perfect rest, of light, comfort, joy, and consolation. Here we are pilgrims and strangers, there is our home, our Father's house. Here we have "no continuing city," 1 Cor. 4:11, no abiding place. Christ's people here in this world, many times, have no certain dwelling place, but are driven from house to house, forced to fly from one city to another, from town to country, from one kingdom to another; constrained to wander from place to place, while others abide in their habitations, they must seek their quarters where they can find them, a while under one friend's roof, a while under another's; which is no small affliction to them that feel it,



though others lay it not to heart. Now what should comfort us in this our pilgrimage and wilderness condition? What should support us in this our wandering and desolate state, but that it was even thus with our blessed Lord Himself upon earth, who had "not where to lay his head?" And so it was with His disciples, and many choice saints as in Heb. 11:37, 38. What should bear up our spirits but this comfortable consideration, that our Lord went to Heaven on purpose to prepare a place for us there? If the earth cast us out, Heaven will receive us; if men say to us, Remove, begone hence, depart away, here is no place, no abiding for you, our dear Lord will call to us out of Heaven and say, Come up hither. Rev. 11:12. Come up to Me, I have prepared a place for you here. There is room in our Father's house, there are many mansions, and from thence there shall be no removal forever, no more any changing houses forever, when once we are lodged in our Father's house. There is our Forerunner for us entered. Heb. 6:20. The hope we have though grace of getting into that blessed place, by that new and living way, to rest there after all our weary wanderings here, and never to remove more, is that which comforts us in these troublesome removals here. Oh, that place, and that blessed state in that place! To see God and to be ever with the Lord, to see our lovely Lord Jesus as He is, and to be made like unto Him! Could we fix our hearts and eyes more steadfastly upon those invisible things, we should more quietly and comfortably bear our present troubles, yea, and rejoice in them. And when we can act our faith upon that place and state above, and conclude our title to it by our interest in Christ, then our hearts will not be troubled.

Also this consideration should preserve us from heart trouble and sorrow for the loss of our dear relations which died in Jesus, for that they are gone home to their Father's house, they are arrived at their harbor, they are safely housed, they are where they would be, they are gone to the place that their beloved Lord went to prepare for them, "to that city of God, to the general assembly of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven." Heb. 12:23. They would not exchange their place now for the most stately and most magnificent place in the whole world. Oh, could we but realize by faith that most happy state and place where our deceased pious friends are gone, our hearts would not be troubled for them.

And this may comfort us also under all our present sufferings and sadnesses, that ere long we also shall go to that place, to that city above which God hath prepared for us. Our Lord assures us that "He will come again, and take us to himself, that where he is, we may be also." Oh, could we believe this, we should say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

5. Our faith must be acted upon *the work that Christ will do for us and in us, and upon us in Heaven at the last*. It is above all our understandings to conceive what glorious works Christ will do for us and in us at the last day. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." 1 John 3:2. There shall be a day of the manifestation of the sons of God. The poor despised saints, all black and cloudy here, covered with shame and reproach now, shall then be manifested to be the Lord's jewels. That will be a day of their full redemption, both of soul and body, their wedding and their solemn coronation day. Then their blessed Redeemer shall publicly own them, and bid them welcome to His Father's house, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." Matt. 25:34. Then will Jesus put the crown of glory, of righteousness, and of life upon their heads. Then will Jesus "present them to his Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Eph. 5:27. Then will He make their (now) vile bodies (subject now to vile corruptions, to vile diseases, to vile abuses, and to a dissolution at death) like unto His own glorious body; and their souls shall be like to His, to their full satisfaction. Then the poor disciples of Christ shall have a full end put to all their heart troubles, sorrows, fears, and cares. Then their hearts shall rejoice, and their joy no man (nor devil) shall take from them. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and they shall enter into everlasting rest, and into that unspeakable, blessed state which was purchased by the precious blood of Jesus, and by Him prepared and possessed in our names and steads. All our dear relations that died in Jesus are already entered. Christ, their dearest Lord, hath wrought this glorious work on their souls already; they are triumphing, singing hallelujahs in the highest heavens, while we are fighting, sighing, and sobbing here below, they are with blessed Jesus above according to His prayer for them, seeing His glory, and participating of it. This much for the work of Christ upon which our faith must act, that our hearts may not be troubled.

#### *D.2b6 The will of Christ*

Sixthly, our faith must act upon the will of Christ, in order to the preventing and curing our heart troubles, fears and sorrows. What is the will of Christ? It is His will that His people's hearts should not be troubled nor afraid, as in the text. It is His will that in the world they should have tribulation, but yet, that they should be of good cheer. It is His will that in their patience they should possess their souls, and not faint nor be discouraged. It is His will they should be sanctified, and that all their afflictions should promote their sanctification. It is His will that although He loves them, yet to rebuke and chasten them; and when He doth so, that they should be zealous and repent. It is His will that they should deny themselves, and take up their cross daily and follow Him. That they should fear none of those things that they should suffer. That they should walk in His steps, hold fast to the end, be faithful unto death. That they should overcome. It is His will that they should not love father or mother, son or daughter, more than Himself; no, nor their lives, but be willing to part with all for His sake. Yea, it is His will, His last will that all His poor disciples, after they have suffered awhile, may

be with Him where He is, to behold His glory. Thus if we act faith upon the will of Christ and labor to yield to it and acquiesce in it, we shall procure much freedom from heart trouble.

#### *D.2b7 The ends and designs of Christ*

Lastly, our faith must be acted upon the ends and designs of Christ in all His afflictive providences towards us; and these His ends are all very good and gracious. With this argument He Himself used to cure the heart trouble of His disciples for His departure from them, viz: that He had good ends in His going away from them. His end was to prepare a place for them, a better place than any to be found here, a place in Heaven, in the Father's house. And His end was to send the Spirit, the Comforter unto them, which would not come if He did not go away. John 16:6, 7. He had told them of His going away from them, upon which sorrow had filled their hearts (and it is even so with us, when our heavenly comforts leave us, sorrow fills our hearts); but to cure this, our Lord answers them, that it was expedient for them (good and necessary for them) that He should go away, showing them His end in going away, to-wit: that He might send them the Comforter. He would remove from them a great mercy, the greatest earthly mercy that ever they enjoyed, which was His personal presence; they must part with so dear and near, so sweet, so loving, so faithful a Friend as Himself was to them. And could there be a greater loss? For this sorrow had filled their hearts. But He tells them it was to make way for a greater mercy, which was to send the Comforter in all the saving and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which they should be able to do greater works than He Himself did, John 14:12, which was a greater mercy than His bodily presence with them; and with this He calms and quiets their minds. Now if we can act faith upon the blessed ends of Christ in removing our earthly comforts, from us, which are, to bestow upon us better mercies, to give us more of His Spirit, and of the graces and comforts of it, our hearts would not be troubled. Could we believe that Christ's end, in all His chastisements, is to prepare us for that place in the Father's house, it would comfort and support us. His ends are very good, and that should quiet us. So long as the people of Christ enjoy most of the comforts of this world (I speak it by sad experience), commonly they enjoy least of God, and of His Spirit; and usually when Christ takes away their earthly comforts, then He manifests most of Himself, and of His tender love to them. He brings them into the wilderness and there speaks comfortably to them. Hos. 2:14. Then He speaks to their hearts, and not to their ears only, as in time of prosperity. Then He gives out most of the graces and comforts of His Spirit. Christ never takes away these outward mercies from His people, but with design to bestow better, if our discontent and unbelief do not hinder. When the Lord took away from His servant David the young child begotten in adultery, it was to give him a Solomon.

Thus I have endeavored to show what it is also to believe in Christ, that thereby we may prevent and cure our heart trouble.

### ***D.3 Faith is the best preventative and remedy to cure all our heart troubles.***

The last thing I have to do is to show how faith, acted thus on God and Christ, or on God in Christ, is the best preventive of, and remedy to cure all our heart troubles, which hath indeed been shown, partly in the two former particulars, and will serve for the confirmation of the point also.

Two ways principally faith acted on God and Christ, doth effect this great cure of heart trouble, and procure heart's ease. First, by way of application and appropriation. Secondly, by way of holy confidence and reliance.

#### *D.3a Application and appropriation*

First, by applying and appropriating God and Christ to the soul, and all that God is, and all that Christ hath, and all that God and Christ hath promised: faith applieth and appropriates all this to the soul, faith gives the soul right, title, claim, propriety, and interest to and in God and Christ; faith makes all the believer's own. Believe, and all is thine. This is the language of faith, my God, my Lord, my Christ, my Savior, my Redeemer; and this quiets and satisfies the soul fully, or nothing in Heaven and earth can do it; when it can thus act its faith on God and Christ. So was David cured of his great troubles. 1 Sam. 30:6. He encouraged himself in the Lord his God, his God in Christ. So in that pregnant text, 2 Sam. 23:5, his interest in God's everlasting covenant (whereby God was become his God in Christ), he acted his faith upon, and that satisfied him. So Mich. 7:7; Psa. 73:25, 26.

Either God is ours, or He is not; either Christ is ours, or He is not; if God and Christ be not ours, we have cause enough of heart trouble, cause enough to mind our danger, and to be troubled at our very hearts, that we are in such a woeful case; and should now above all things labor after an interest in God and in Christ. Whatever our losses in the world be, this dangerous state of our souls should be most minded and speedily looked after above all things.

But if God be ours, and if Christ be ours, if we have chosen God for our portion in Christ; and if we have rightly and truly received Jesus Christ the Lord for our only Lord and Savior, and have unfeignedly given up our whole selves to Him; then may we act our faith upon God as our God and upon Jesus Christ as ours, and may claim our right in God and in Christ, and in all that God and Christ is and hath as our own. And then, what cause of any heart trouble? If God be ours,

if Christ be ours, all is ours, life ours, death ours: what if we want relations and friends, honor, wealth and health, is not the all-sufficient God enough? Is not Jesus, in whom dwells all fullness, enough to supply the want of all? This God proposed to Abraham, I am thy God, and to Israel. Isa. 41:10. Jesus Christ is all and in all; and if Christ be yours, all is yours; God is yours, and the good of both worlds are yours; and what can you desire more?

### *D.3b Faith exercised in holy confidence upon God*

Secondly, faith exercised in holy confidence in, and reliance upon God and Christ, and the promises, will prevent or cure all our heart trouble. David was cured both these ways. Psa. 31:11-15, viz: by appropriating God to himself and trusting in Him: "I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God." Psa. 43:5, for God is pleased to engage Himself to discharge those souls from heart trouble and sinful fear, who trust in Him. Psa. 37:40. Trouble doth disorder the heart, and discompose the mind, but faith in this exercise of it, trusting in the Lord, doth fix and settle the heart, so that then no evil tidings shall make such a person afraid, for his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. Psa. 112:7. God hath promised to "keep them in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on him, because they trust in him." Isa. 26:3. Diffidence is the cause of all disquiet; no true rest can be had, nor quiet to our minds, but by confidence in God. Psa. 2: last. Oh the blessedness of those that trust in Christ; God in Christ is the only fit object of our confidence in all our extremities. A believer hath a God to go to in all his troubles, an almighty and loving Father in Christ; and this should be our comfort, that we are in covenant with Him that rules the world, and hath committed the government of all things to His Son, our dear Redeemer, who hath bought us with His blood; and we may be sure that no hurt shall befall us that He can hinder; and what can He not hinder, who hath all power in Heaven and in earth and that hath the keys of hell and death, unto whom we are so near, that He carries our names on His heart, and who will in His due time make all the world know that His people are as dear to Him as the apple of His eye.

Trust then, depend and rely upon God in Christ, and by a holy confidence, resign up your will to His will, to do what He would have us do; to be what He would have us be; to suffer what He would have us suffer; and then heart trouble will cease, and sweet peace cometh. When, having trusted all with God, we can in heart say, Lord, if thou wilt have me poor, disgraced, imprisoned, diseased, deprived of my dearest friends, I am content to be so, I trust all my concerns with thee. Oh the sweet peace and quiet that will be in that soul!

There is the almightiness, the wisdom, goodness, love, mercy, and faithfulness of God in Christ for us to trust in and rely upon, a bottom and foundation strong enough to build our confidence upon in all storms and straits. God hath also made many exceeding great and precious promises in His word, and not a naked promise, but He hath entered into covenant with us, founded upon full satisfaction by the blood of Jesus, and confirmed it with an oath, Heb. 6:17, and to this covenant, sealed by the blood of His Son, He hath added the seals of the sacrament; and all this that the heirs of the promises, namely, all true believers, might have strong consolation, and be cured of all their heart troubles.

Upon this sure foundation then must our faith act in a holy confidence in God and in Christ, the soul being taken off from all other objects, carried out of self unto God and Christ, who presently (as soon as trusted in) communicate themselves and their love and goodness to the soul, filling it with peace, strength, and settlement. By this trusting in God we honor God most, and best provide for our own safety.

The way then, whereby faith quieteth the soul and cures it of its troubles, is by raising it above all disquietments, and pitching it solely upon God in Christ; and thereby uniting it to God in Christ, from whence it draws virtue and strength to subdue whatever troubleth its peace. For the soul is made for God and never finds rest till it return unto, and settle and center itself upon Him again. And that we may thus place our confidence in God and Christ for all supplies, we must earnestly beg, cry, and seek to God for grace and strength so to do; we must trust in God alone for all things, and at all times; and thus by appropriating God to us, and Christ to us, and placing our confidence in them, we may be cured of all our heart troubles.

## **II. Uses of This Doctrine**

### **A. What we can infer from this doctrine.**

For information. These inferences follow:

*First*, if faith acted upon God in Christ be such a remedy against heart trouble, then surely *faith is a very precious, a very excellent thing*; a grace of very great worth and value, and of great use and efficacy. It is precious faith indeed, the

very trial of it is more precious than gold. 1 Pet. 1:7. Precious for its author, the Lord Jesus; for its object, precious Jesus, and all the exceeding great and precious promises, the purchased inheritance. For its offices it unites us to Christ, gives us title to eternal life; it supports under all afflictions, prevents or cures all heart troubles; and precious for its end, which is the salvation of our souls. Eph. 3:17; Heb. 11:39; 1 Pet. 1:9.

This grace of faith is of a transforming, spiritual nature; and the soul of a believer, by acting it on God and Christ, and on divine, heavenly and spiritual things, becomes divine, heavenly and spiritual. Faith unfasteneth the heart from the creature, showing the soul the vanity of it, and carries the soul unto God and Christ, showing it God's all-sufficiency, and Christ's all-fulness; for faith believes what God in His word hath revealed of both. It is the great design of God in all the troubles He sends upon His people, effectually to teach them the exceeding vanity of the creature, to embitter the things of this world to them, to wean their hearts from them, to bring earthly things out of request with them, to make them see that there is no true contentment, nor solid satisfaction for the soul to be found in them, and to make them see their true happiness and contentment is to be had, even in God and in Christ alone, for whom their souls were created, redeemed, and sanctified. Now the great work of faith is, to take off the soul from the creature, and fix and settle it upon God and Christ, the true foundation. Naturally our hearts hang loose from God, and cleave to the creature, and when the creature fails, our hearts are troubled; but faith takes off the heart from the creature, and settles it upon God in Christ where it finds rest; and this is the great service it doth us. All the great and famous things which these worthies did, and all the hard and heavy things they suffered, mentioned in Hebrews 11, were all done and suffered by the power of faith, verse 37, etc. The settling of our hearts upon God in Christ, trusting all there, is the best means to cure our heart trouble; and thus faith doth and therefore it is precious.

*Secondly*, it follows from the promises that *the want of faith in God and in Christ, is the great cause of all our heart troubles*, despondencies and disquietness. Could we but act our faith strongly on God in Christ, as our God in Christ, our troubles would be prevented or cured; for by faith the soul looks up to God in Christ through the promises, looking off from all other supports unto God for all supplies, for the removing of all evil felt or feared, and for the obtaining of all good promised and needed; and by this exercise of faith, the soul is raised up above all discouragements and disquietments. But where this faith is wanting, or the lively exercise of it suspended, there the soul sinks under heart troubles. But of this somewhat was said before.

*Thirdly*, hence also we may clearly see *the absolute necessity of getting faith in God, and in Christ; and of acting it, and living by it*. There is no living quietly and comfortably without it, no standing under our burdens, no bearing with patience and cheerfulness our losses and crosses without this faith; no joy and peace, but by believing; by faith we stand.

*Fourthly*, Then *the things of the world are not to be trusted to*, nor trusted in, for comfort in time of trouble. Nothing but God and Christ to be trusted in, and trusted to, and there is enough in them to support and comfort us, as hath been showed; but no confidence to be put in the creature. There is a curse upon such confidence, but a blessing on them that trust in God: no trusting in friends, riches, gifts, or any thing; for so to do is idolatry, to give that to the creature which is due to God alone.

*Fifthly*, Hence we see the reason *why so many faint in the day of adversity*, and sin under trouble; and others use unlawful means to prevent trouble, or to get out of it. It is because they want this faith in God and Christ; and for want of it, too many miscarry under affliction.

## **B. You must get and act faith in God**

The second use is, by way of exhortation to all the disciples of Christ, in the word of the text: "Let not your heart be troubled," but believe in God, and believe in Christ. You must get and act faith in God and Christ. This is the only preventive, the only remedy against heart trouble. Our Lord in this text commands it, and commends it. We must needs get faith above all gettings. Next to Christ, we must get faith, for we cannot have Christ without faith. Go to God for it. It is His work, His gift, yea, it is His operation; yea, the same power that raiseth up Jesus from the dead, must be put forth upon a soul to work faith. Eph. 1:19, 20. The exceeding great and mighty working of the power of God, to raise up the soul to God and Christ, and to enable it to lay hold on God and Christ: for such is our natural proneness to live by sense and carnal reason; and such is the most transcendent excellency of God and Christ, and of divine things which faith looks unto; and so great an inclination we have to self-sufficiency, and so much rooted in self-love, and inordinate love of the creature, and so hard to take off the soul from false bottoms; and because we are such strangers to God naturally, and because there is so much guilt of sin still remaining in us, by our renewed provocations, that we are afraid to entertain serious thoughts of God: and because of that infinite distance between God and us, we can never come to believe in Him, and rely upon Him, until our hearts be renewed by the power of grace, and this divine grace of faith infused into them:

therefore must we go to God and Christ, and put up strong cries and prayers to God to work faith in us, and never give over, until it be wrought in us.

And having got faith, we must act and exercise it upon God in Christ; upon God, I say. He only is the object of faith, and is worthy of it. For a man can be in no condition in which God is at a loss and cannot help him. If comforts and means of deliverance be wanting, God can create comforts, and command deliverance. Isa. 57:19. He can bring light out of darkness. To Him all things are possible.

1. Then faith assents to, and is persuaded that there is a God, the infinite, first, and best Being of all things, and who giveth being to all things. Heb. 11:6.

2. That in this blessed Being are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and all the object of our faith.

3. Faith must always act on God in Christ, and not otherwise; for in Christ, God reconciles the world. In Christ, God becomes our friend, is at peace with us; by Christ, the enmity between God and us is taken away; in Christ God becomes our Father. John 1:12; Gal. 3:26.

4. Faith is acted by meditation on, considering of, and applying and appropriating of God in Christ to the soul, laying claim to all that God is, and to all that God hath as its own.

5. It must also act upon the promises of God in His word, and upon God and Christ in them. God hath opened all His heart to us in His word, making many sweet promises, exceeding great and precious promises, 2 Pet. 1:4; and also, He hath made a covenant of grace with us, to bestow Himself and all good things upon us, upon which we must live, until promises end in performances. These promises are our spiritual treasury; promises of pardon of sin, upon repentance and faith: promises of renewing sanctifying grace: promises of the Spirit, of heaven, of eternal life and glory, of mansions in the Father's house, and of all things needful in the way of the kingdom, that we shall want no good thing, and that all things shall work together for our good, etc.

### **C. Take hold of God's strength**

Lastly, That our hearts may not be troubled, but fully satisfied and comforted, we must by faith lay hold on God, take hold of God's strength, which is His mercy in Christ; and most solemnly, most considerately, and most sincerely, take God for our God in Christ, and actually enter into covenant with Him. This covenant is founded upon Jesus Christ, His satisfaction and righteousness; and therefore we must also believe in Christ, taking Him for our only Lord and Savior, receiving Him by faith as He is offered to us in the gospel, to be all in all to us.

As God offers, so faith receives; God offers Himself in Christ, and so faith receives Him. God doth, as it were, say in the gospel, O poor lost sinner, come to My Son Jesus, take Him for thy only Lord and Savior; and by Him come to Me, and take Me for thy God and Father; and by faith the poor believer echoeth back, My Lord and my God, I humbly and heartily come to Thee, accept of Thee, close with Thee. And so by faith the believing soul becomes one with God and Christ; and hereupon the soul by faith cleaves to God and Christ, and unfeignedly, and unreservedly, resigns and gives up its whole self to God in Christ, taking God in Christ for him, and entirely surrenders up itself to be the Lord's. "My beloved is mine, and I am his." Now faith, thus acted, will certainly cure all heart troubles.

In order, then, to obtain solid comfort in all our distresses, let us carefully look whether these acts of faith have really passed upon our souls. Have we thus actually, understandingly, and sincerely believed in God, and in Christ? Have we unfeignedly entered into covenant with God in Christ? Can we conclude that God is our God in Christ by our being His? If we be entirely His, He is ours for certain. 1 Jn. 4:19; Cant. 2:16. If we place all our happiness in Him, Psa. 73:25; if we give Him the throne in our hearts, subjecting our whole selves to His government, making God in Christ all our love, our trust, joy, desire, delight, fear, our all, cleaving to Him alone and above all, depending upon Him as our chief good; contenting ourselves with Him as all-sufficient for us, resigning up ourselves to His good will, to be, to do, and suffer what He will; if we can and do engage ourselves to sincere obedience, that none of His commandments be grievous to us; if in all things we give Christ the preeminence; if we have received the Spirit of Christ, as Rom. 8:9, Gal. 4:6, which joins us to Him, and makes us "one spirit with him," and which is a spirit of adoption whereby the soul, seeing his interest in God as his Father, can freely go to God in all its straits; if we have the graces of the Spirit, as love, meekness, patience, humility, etc.; if we have a resemblance of our Father in us, a likeness of disposition to God and Christ, the image of God, the life of Christ manifest in us; if we side with God and His cause, in evil times, so that we are willing to part with all things for Christ's sake and at His call; if it be thus with us in the main bent and constant frame of our hearts, and in the sincerity and integrity of our souls, our consciences in the sight of God bearing us witness that thus it is with us, then may we upon good grounds conclude that God, the all-sufficient God, is ours, and Christ Jesus, who is all fulness, is ours, and then our hearts should not be troubled. And to prevent and cure all our heart trouble, we must act faith on all these things,

in God and in Christ, which I mentioned before, and which would be too long to repeat again here. Therefore I earnestly desire you to look back and view over those several particular things considerable in God and in Christ, applying and appropriating them to ourselves, and we shall see we have no cause of heart trouble. If the great God be ours, and the Lord Jesus be ours; if we have no husbands, nor wives, nor sons, nor daughters, nor health, nor wealth, we have enough to content and satisfy our souls for ever.

## D. Act in faith on Christ

But to draw to a conclusion, that there may be an effectual cure of all our heart trouble, whatever our distress may be, let us labor to act faith on Christ, in considering and believing,—

1. What He is. 2. Where He is. 3. What He hath declared. 4. What He hath promised. And all within the confines of this text, verses 2-3.

### D.1 What Christ is

First, Let Christ's disciples labor to believe what Christ is, and who He is. He himself asked His disciples this question. Matt. 16:16, "Who say ye that I am? Peter answered, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." "I know in whom I have believed," saith the apostle; and that supported him. And for this knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord, he counted all things but dung and dross. Phil. 3:9. To believe all things that are written of Christ is not enough; but to believe in Him is by faith to receive Him for our only Lord and Savior, Jn. 1:12, Col. 2:6, and actually, unreservedly, unfeignedly and heartily to give up our whole selves unto Him, taking Him for our absolute Lord, our Head, our Treasure, and our All; and believing He is all that to us that He is. That He was made sin for us, made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption to us. That He is indeed our Husband, our Head, our High Priest, our Surety, our Ransom, our Redeemer. That He hath loved us and washed us in His blood. That He was delivered up to death for our offences, and rose again for our justification. That He hath made our peace with God by the blood of His cross; and purchased our pardon, and an inheritance for us with the saints in light; and that by believing in Him we shall have everlasting life. Jn. 3:16, 36. I say, this is to believe in Christ; and such as thus believe in Him have no cause of heart trouble. And thus we must believe in Him, and it is the commandment of God to believe in Him. 1 Jn. 3:23, and the positive command of Christ Himself in the text, "Believe also in me." And He that hath this faith, hath Christ, 1 Jn. 5:10, 12, and hath life, eternal life. Jn. 6:47, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," (saith Christ, the eternal truth Himself) "he that believeth on me hath everlasting life." He hath it *in pretio*, in the price of it, that was punctually paid down upon the cross, therefore called the "purchased possession." He hath eternal life in promises, in the promises of it; it is promised to every one that believed; God that cannot lie hath promised it. Tit. 1:1, 2. And he hath it *in primitiis*, in the first fruits of it, the saving graces of the Spirit which in some measure every true believer hath. 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13, 14.

Now, he that thus believes in Christ, Christ is his; and all that Christ hath done and suffered, and merited, is his. He hath right and title to it; for by faith he is become the child of God. Gal. 3:26. We are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. And if we be Christ's, then are we the heirs of the promise, Gal. 3:29, yea, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Rom. 8:17. Yea, then "all things are ours." 1 Cor. 3:21-23. All is ours, if we be Christ's, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. All the gifts, graces, labors, prayers of all gospel ministers, all gospel ordinances are ordained and designed for our good, Eph. 4:11-13, for the gathering of us in, and for the perfecting and building of us up in Christ Jesus, until we all come to heaven. The world is ours; the good and evil of it, the bitter and the sweet of it, the comforts and the crosses of it, the gains and the losses of it, the love and the hate of it, the smiles and the frowns, the friends and foes in it; all is designed for and shall further promote our spiritual and eternal welfare. Life is ours. All the troubles, sicknesses, pains, evil tidings, persecutions, disappointments, losses of relations, shame, reproach, or whatever attends this mortal life, shall be sanctified and blessed to us for our good. Yea, death is ours, that shall be our advantage, our gain; that shall put a full end and period to all our sin and suffering, and be a door of entrance for us in glory in our Father's house. Or things present, our present fears, sorrows, miseries, infirmities, etc. shall be so ordered and overruled by the wisdom and love of our Father, that they shall all help us onward to heaven. And things to come are ours, all that glory to be revealed, that saints' everlasting rest that is prepared for the people of God, that crown of righteousness, glory, and of life; that kingdom of glory, that unspeakable, that inconceivable state of happiness and blessedness which Christ our Lord hath purchased by His blood, all this is ours also. But how come we to have a right and title to all this? Why, saith the apostle, thus, "Ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." As sure as Christ is God's, so sure, if you be Christ's, all is yours. And, as I have proved, if we be true believers in Christ, then we are Christ's; we are His members, His spouse, His children. And then, what cause have we to be troubled at any thing, or in any condition? What cause hath such a soul to be dejected, whatever crosses or losses do befall him? Is there not enough in Christ, in the promises, in the purchase of Christ? Is there not enough in

heaven, in all that glory, to quiet, content, and fully satisfy our souls? O my beloved (and oh my base and faithless heart), it is our base unbelief that doth us all the mischief, that spoils our peace, that hinders our comfort, and makes us walk so heavily. O let us bewail this God-dishonoring sin, this peace-destroying sin, and let us, who have received Jesus for our Lord and Savior, believe that He is ours indeed, and that we are His indeed, and then act our faith upon Him, and our hearts shall not be troubled.

*Question: But may some say, it is true, if Christ be ours all is ours; we believe that. But how shall we know that Christ is ours?*

Answer: Briefly thus: If we be Christ's, entirely and sincerely Christ's, then Christ is ours. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Cant. 2:16; 6:3. Her being Christ's was a sure evidence to her that Christ was hers. Now it is not very hard to know whose we are, whether we be Christ's or our own, Christ's or the world's, Christ's or the devil's. Let us take a little pains in trying and searching ourselves; the matter requires it. Whose are we? Put this question seriously to our hearts, in the sight of God: Whose am I? Whose image do I bear? By whose spirit am I acted? Who hath my heart, my chief love and delight? Have we unfeignedly given up ourselves to Christ? Have we actually entered into covenant with Him, taken Him for our Head and Husband; have we passed over and surrendered up our whole selves to Christ, our souls, bodies, all our concerns? Have we given up our hearts, heads, tongues, time, talents, estates, liberties, relations, and all to Christ? Have we done sincerely? Then we have received Christ upon His terms. If we be Christ's and not our own, and live unto Christ, and not to ourselves, Rom. 14:9; 1 Cor. 6:20; Gal. 2:20, and are content that Christ should dispose of us and ours as He pleaseth; and are always laboring to be more and more like Him, and still longing for more and more communion with Him, etc., then may we, upon good grounds, conclude that Christ is ours.

Again, if we truly believe in Christ, then He is ours, for it is by faith that we receive Him and are united to Him, and made one with Him, Jn. 1:12, 13, and are by His Spirit and word regenerated and made new creatures, and are enabled to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 8:1, 2. He that believeth hath the witness in himself. 1 John 5:10. He need not go far to seek. Make sure thy believing in Christ, and thou hast the witness in thyself that He is thine, and that thou are His.

*Question: But how shall we know that we have true faith, and that we do truly believe in Christ?*

Answer: Briefly thus: if we have been made sensible of our lost condition by nature, of our misery by sin, of our unbelief; if we found it a hard work to believe; if we have been made weary and heavy laden with sin, so as to be truly willing to part with all sin; if we have been convinced of our absolute need of Christ, and of His incomparable excellency, of His all-sufficiency and willingness to save us; if Christ be most precious to us; if these convictions have been powerful in us, to drive us from ourselves, and the creature, and sin; if we have hereupon been persuaded and enabled sincerely to come to Christ upon His call in the gospel, to accept of Him upon His terms, and to receive Him, as He is offered to us in the gospel; if our whole hearts have opened to Him, and closed with Him, and we have given up our whole selves entirely to Him, and taken Him for our only Lord and Savior, as the only way to God, and do most sincerely resign up ourselves to His government, trusting in Him alone, and relying upon Him for life and righteousness, for grace and glory: then we do believe in Him. Then have we this true faith, which is further to be known thus, that it worketh in us true sincere love to Him, and to all that is Him, His word, His people. Your heart will run out after Him. All your affection will center in Him. This true faith draws virtue from Christ to purify the heart, and works sanctification and holiness; it doth crucify your affections to the world. It works true repentance, and enables you to overcome the world, and to realize the glory of heaven, and to bear us up under all the troubles in our way thither, as in that 11th to the Hebrews, enabling us to trust and betrust ourselves, our souls and bodies, and all our concernments, with Christ. By this faith we walk, by it we live, and hold on, in following the Lamb to the end of our life. Heb. 10:38, etc.

Now certainly he that thus believes in Christ, hath no cause of heart trouble, but quietly submits to the good will of his God and Christ under all the dispensations of His providence, while he is here in this vale of tears, until he come home to his Father's house in peace, where he shall meet his dearest Lord, and a hearty welcome. O this faith, this precious faith in Christ, will conquer all our base fears, moderate all our worldly sorrows, ease our minds perplexed with earthly cares, and quiet our disturbed and distracted thoughts about our outward losses and troubles. By this faith we shall find all our losses made up in God and in Christ. O then labor for it, cry mightily to God for this great gift; cry to Jesus for it, He is the author and finisher of it; and labor to act it upon Him continually, and your hearts shall not be troubled.

I dare affirm, that if any thing bring heart's ease in heart trouble, this will do it. So long as our faith holds up in act and exercise upon Christ, we shall be free from heart trouble, but when our faith fails, our heart troubles prevail; as when Moses lifted up his hands (and his heart too by faith), Israel prevailed; but when his hands were down, Amalek prevailed. Faith and heart trouble are like a pair of balances. When one goes up, the other goes down. Faith is the counterpoise of trouble of heart. Believe then in Jesus, act faith on Him, and that will prevent or cure heart trouble. Continue in the faith and your heart trouble will cease. Believe what Christ is, and what He is to us.

## ***D.2 Where Christ Is***

Secondly, Let us believe in Christ and believe where He is. As to His essential presence He is in heaven, at the Father's right hand, making continual intercession for us to the Father. Heb. 12:2, 3; 7:25. He is our advocate with the Father, 1 Jn. 2:1, 2, pleading our cause, presenting all our services, perfumed with His own righteousness, and resenting and feeling our infirmities, sorrows, and sufferings, sympathising with us; in all our afflictions He is afflicted. Isa. 63:9. He knows all our troubles, trials, temptations, sickness, losses, and miseries. Jesus Himself knew when He was on earth what it was to lose a friend. He wept when His friend Lazarus was dead. He is a most tender-hearted Savior, a most merciful High Priest. He sees and feels now in heaven all the miseries of His people upon earth, and pleads for them there. Believe this, and let not your hearts be troubled.

And as to His spiritual and providential presence, He is always with His people on earth; He is in His people, "Christ in you the hope of glory." Col. 1:27. He is in His word and ordinances by His Spirit, to bless them to His people. Christ is all, Col. 3:11, and in all. He is all, that is, instead of all, of father, mother, husband, wife; of son and daughter; instead of health, wealth, liberty, and all to His people. "In him dwelleth all fulness." Eph. 1:23; 3:17. And He is also in all, He filleth all in all. In all His people He dwells in their hearts by faith. All our flesh-springs are in Him; all the strength, support, and comfort we have comes from Him. He is in all providences, be they never so bitter, so afflictive, never so smarting, so destructive to our earthly comforts, Christ is in them all; His love, His wisdom, His mercy, His pity and compassion is in them all; every cup is of His preparing; it is Jesus your best Friend, O ye poor believers, who most dearly loves you. It is He that died for you, that appoints all those providences, orders them all, overrules, moderates, and sanctifies them all, and will sweeten them all; and in His due time will make them all profitable unto you, that you shall have cause one day to praise and bless His Name for them all. Oh that we could but believe all this, and could by faith look unto our Jesus in all dark providences, and by faith behold this Jesus managing of them, and believe His love, wisdom, tenderness, and faithfulness in all; in our sicknesses, losses, prisons, restraint, etc. Then surely our hearts should not be troubled.

## ***D.3 What Christ has declared***

Thirdly, Believe in Christ, believe what He hath told us. "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you." Jn. 14:3. Let us act faith upon these true sweet sayings of our dear Lord, who is truth itself; in My Father's house are many mansions. In My Father's house; My Father's and your Father's house, one house must hold us all. Jn. 20:17, "I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God"; and it is in that house which is far above all heavens, all visible elementary heavens, the third heaven; that is, the Father's house, "that house not made with hands, whose builder and maker is God, and is eternal." 2 Cor. 5:1, 2. This city of the living God, this new Jerusalem; there, saith Christ, are many mansions, many dwellings, many fixed, abiding, lasting, everlasting habitations: not tents and tabernacles, such as we live in here on earth, but mansions, abiding places. Is not this a most comfortable consideration to such poor saints, as have here on earth no certain dwelling place, not a house of their own wherein to lay their heads, but are forced to remove from place to place, still seeking a habitation, banished from family and friends, from relations and acquaintance; some cast into prisons, (while others dwell safely in their own houses) and others exposed to much hardship and danger. I say, this is good news to them, that in their Father's house are many mansions. There are everlasting habitations ready to receive them, made ready for them; from which, when once they are entered, they shall never be cast out more; from whence there shall be no more any remove for ever. When once their earthly house of this tabernacle is broken down, they shall possess that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Let us then by faith often look into the Father's house, and view, and review those many mansions that are there; and let us act hope also, that shortly we shall possess that place, and enjoy that blessed state. The believing frequent prospects of that place, will prevent our heart trouble, or cure it.

"If it were not so, I would have told you," saith our Lord. If there were not such a blessed state, and glorious place for My disciples in the other world, after all your sufferings in this, I would have told you so: for I have told of the many troubles you must endure in this world; and for your support and comfort I am now telling you what good things you shall shortly enjoy above in My Father's house; where is all joy, peace, rest, and consolation. There are many mansions, no prisons, chains, nor fetters, but glorious dwellings enough to hold all the saints that ever were and that ever shall be in the world, where they shall enjoy full and free communion with the blessed Trinity, and with one another; perfect liberty, without any restraint or remove forever. Believe this and let not your heart be troubled.

"I go to prepare a place for you." I have purchased this most glorious place for you, by My blood. I have promised it to you; now I go away to take possession of it for you, in your name and stead. Oh what a heart-comforting and heart-easing consideration should this be to us poor believers, that our Lord went from earth to heaven on purpose to prepare a



place in Heaven for us, to possess it in our name and stead; and in the meantime He is preparing us by His word and Spirit, by afflictions and deliverances for that glorious place. Hence He is called the forerunner, who is for us entered into that within the veil. Heb. 6:20. So that, as sure as Christ Himself ascended and went into the highest heavens, so sure shall all His disciples, all true believers ascend and enter into Heaven also because He went thither Himself to prepare Heaven for them, by taking possession of it in His human nature for us, as our Head and Savior. God hath prepared for them a city. Heb. 11. Heaven and heavenly glory is said to be prepared. Matt. 25:34. If we could believe that Christ hath prepared a place in Heaven for us, and that Heaven will make amends for all our sufferings in the way thither; and if we would keep the eye of faith upon that "recompense of reward, that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. 4:16-18, we should bear up bravely under our sufferings and not have our hearts troubled.

Let us then look more heavenward, more to our Father's house; let us have our conversations more in heaven and set our affections more upon things above; upon that blessed state and place above, and know "that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory." Col. 3:1-3. Believe this and be comforted.

Certainly we are too much taken up with and too solicitous about our earthly tabernacles, these houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, crushed before the moth. We are always minding the diseases, distempers, and dangers of our bodies, those old, crazy, tottering houses, the prisons of our souls. We mind earthly places too much, but too little those heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Eph. 2:6, where we shall shortly sit with Him. Were we more heavenly-minded, we should be more free from heart trouble and disquietness of mind.

#### ***D.4 What Christ has promised***

Lastly, to prevent and cure all our heart trouble, let us labor to believe what Christ hath promised here in the text: Verse 3: "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, ye may be also." Most sweet and comfortable promises!

"I will come again." So verse 18: "I will come again; I will not leave you comfortless"; for when I am absent from you in respect of My bodily presence, "I will send the Comforter to you, that shall abide with you forever." And I Myself will come again unto you. You shall not long be without My company. Though Christ seems to withdraw and hide His face from His people, it shall be but a little moment. Isa. 54:7, 8. He will return again and have mercy, yea, with everlasting kindness will He return. "I will come again." I will not stay long from you, My heart is still towards you while I am absent, therefore I will come quickly. Rev. 3:11. I will come to you with My messenger, death; though it be the king of terrors in itself, and a grim porter, yet by My coming with it, it shall be to you the king of comforts. I will come with it, by My Spirit, to strengthen you to look it in the face, to apply to you the virtue of My death, and thereby to take out the sting of it; and I will come to you by My angels to secure your souls through the region of devils, into My Father's house. If death did come alone to us, it would be terrible to us indeed, its ghastly countenance would affright us; but here is the comfort, that Christ our dearest Lord, will come with death to sweeten it to us, and support us under it. This prevented David's fear, Psa. 23:4: "When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." Oh welcome death! when Christ comes with it. This bitter cup, of which we must all drink, is brought to us by the hand of our dearest: Lord. This last stroke is given by the hand of love. It is a taking us home to our Father's house. This last enemy hath Christ conquered for us, because His children are "partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same, that through death (that is, His own death) he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. 2:14. Jesus knew what death was. He Himself had the pangs of death upon Him. Sin, the sting of death was laid on Him; and the law, which is the strength of sin, the curse of the law was upon Him; but now for us, who believe in Jesus, the sting and strength of death is taken out and when we die we shall die in the Lord, sleep in Jesus, in union and communion with Jesus; we shall fall asleep in the blessed arms of our dear Redeemer. He will come then to keep us company, through the dark entry (death) into the Father's house. His angels shall carry our souls into Abraham's bosom, yea, into the Father's bosom. Oh that we would make sure of our union with Christ; and then let us believe, that He will come with death to translate our souls out of these earthly tabernacles, these prison houses, these houses of bondage (wherein our poor souls have been fettered and chained, cloyed and clogged with corruptions and temptations, kept at a distance, and absent from the Lord, and in which they have been groaning for deliverance) into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, in their Father's house, and shall ever be with the Lord. 1 Thess. 4:17.

Secondly, I will receive you to Myself. Oh sweet promise! This is all the hope, all the desire, all the longing, thirsting, breathing of poor believers, viz: that Christ would take them to Himself. This is the sum of all their prayers and labors, that they may be fitted for Christ, and that Christ would take them to Himself. Well, saith Christ, work and wait a little longer; do, and suffer a little more; act your faith and patience a little longer, and I will come to you, and take you home to Myself, where your soul shall be at rest forever. The saints, while they are here, at home in the body, they are absent from

the Lord; they see but in part, darkly, and know but in part, very imperfectly, and enjoy but a little, a very little of God in Christ. Oh how sweet are a few drops, a few glimpses and glances of divine love now to a poor soul. The least cast of Christ's eye, the least beam of His lovingkindness, the least intimation of His favor, the least hint of His goodness, how refreshing to a poor believer! But when Christ shall receive them to Himself, they shall then "see him as he is, shall be like him, and shall be satisfied with his likeness." 1 John 3:2, 3. Psa. 17:15. Then shall they see Him, whom their souls love, face to face; and then will Jesus open to them all the treasures of His love and grace to their everlasting consolation. They shall then be admitted into the glorious presence of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ, in whose presence is fulness of joy and at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psa. 16:11. When the world shall cast them out, and their habitations shall cast them out, and shall know them no more; yea, when their houses of clay shall be broken down and dissolved, and can hold them no longer, then will Jesus, blessed Jesus, receive them to Himself. Then shall they be solemnly married to their glorious Bridegroom, the King of Heaven's Son, the Prince of the kings of the earth. He will receive them to Himself, He will take them for His bride, embrace them in His everlasting arms and lay them in His blessed bosom forever and ever. I will receive you to Myself, into the nearest union and communion with Myself; and therefore be not unwilling to part with your dear relations; be not afraid to be separated from your bodies, your old friends; for when these earthly tabernacles are dissolved, immediately I will receive you to Myself, which is best of all. You shall then enjoy the fruits of all My sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, and the fruits of all your own labors, prayers, tears, and sufferings; and shall find that I am faithful in making good all My promises, and that your labor was not in vain in the Lord; then shall there be no more any distance between you and Me forever. Comfort yourselves and comfort one another with these words. Believe this and let not your heart be troubled.

Thirdly, "That where I am, ye may be also." And what more can be desired? Where is Christ but "at the right hand of the Majesty on high, far above all principalities and powers, far above all heavens," Heb. 12:2, there shall you be also. Oh, admirable, astonishing dignity, that blessed Jesus will advance His poor saints unto at that day! This high and wonderful honor shall all His saints have; they shall now receive the kingdom prepared for them, and that crown of glory, of righteousness, and of life which Christ hath purchased for them, perfectly freed now from all sin and sorrow, and stated in an unchangeable state of happiness and blessedness. What cause have we then to grieve for our dear relations, whom Christ hath taken to Himself, and placed in the Father's house, who are now sitting at His right hand in glory, and singing hallelujahs? And could we but firmly believe these promises of our Lord, and act our faith in meditating fixedly on them, and on Jesus in them, applying and appropriating them, and Christ in them, to our own souls, considering and pondering on them until our hearts be warmed and our affections stirred and kindled with them, acting also hope, love, joy, desire, delight, hunger, thirst, panting, breathing; pouring out our hearts in prayer to God for His Spirit to bring home these promises to our souls in power, fixing them upon our hearts, and helping us to lay hold on them, and upon Christ in them, and resigning up our whole souls to Christ in them, steadfastly relying on His goodness and faithfulness and trusting in Him; I say, could we but do so, and in the strength of God betrust our whole selves, and all our concerns thus with Christ, and live in the lively exercise of faith thus on God and on Christ, we should find this to be heart's ease to us in all our heart trouble. "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded." 1 Pet. 2:6.

*Let all heart trouble cease,  
Let nought disturb your peace,  
Who faith in God profess,  
And in His Son no less.  
  
For in the Father's house  
Are many mansions sweet,  
Christ hath prepared for us,  
When we're for them made meet.*

### **III. How This Faith Is Manifested**

*Question: It may be demanded, that having heard the excellency and usefulness of this sovereign medicine to cure heart trouble, namely, faith in God and in Christ, can you tell us how we may get this faith? And what means we shall use to obtain it?*

Answer: I shall endeavor, by the help of God's Spirit, and Scripture light to direct you herein, and as briefly as I may.

## **A. Be convinced of your unbelief**

Direction 1. First, you must be convinced of your unbelief, of the greatness of the sin of unbelief, and of your absolute need of faith. Of these three things you must be fully convinced.

1. Of your unbelief; for most people think they have faith, and that they never were without it, and therefore labor not for it. Pray earnestly therefore that the Holy Spirit may be sent into your hearts to work this conviction in you, for it is His proper work, Jn. 16:8, to convince the world of sin, because they believe not on Me, saith our Lord. This is a great sin, the damned sin of the world, their not believing on Christ. Now that we may be convinced, that by nature we have no faith, let us consider these scriptures: Eph. 2:1, 2, 12, and that until we are regenerate or born again, we have no faith, is evident from John 1:12, 13. There, believing in Christ, and regeneration, are inseparably joined together. Acts 15:9, and 26:18 and 20, and 21. From which scriptures it is most evident that such as are strangers to the heart-purifying, the heart-sanctifying work of faith, have no faith. If we have not truly repented, nor know any saving change wrought in us, and upon us, by the Spirit of God, for certain, whatever we think, we have no true saving faith; it is but a fancy. Of this, then, we must be fully convinced, and must most heartily beg the help of the Spirit to convince us.

2. Of the greatness of the sin of unbelief. It binds the guilt of all other sins upon us; it is disobedience and rebellion against the great God, for He commands us to believe. 1 Jn. 3:21. And by our unbelief we make God a liar. 1 Jn. 5:10. Oh, horrible wickedness! And,

3. We must be convinced also of our absolute need of faith. We must needs have it, or we must perish. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Heb. 11:6. Without it we cannot be the children of God. Jn. 1:12; Gal. 3:26. Without it we can have no pardon of sin. Acts 10:43; Rom. 3:25; Jn. 8:24. And what a dangerous case are we, so long as we lie under the guilt of all our sins! Without faith we are not reconciled to God, nor justified. Rom. 3:22; 5:1. Nor can we be sanctified. Acts 26:18; 2 Thess 2:13. No access to God but by faith. Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18. No living the life of religion, nor bearing up under affliction, nor holding out to the end without faith. Heb. 11. No salvation, nor eternal life without it. Eph. 2:18; Jn. 3:16, 36; Heb. 10: last. Of all these things we must be convinced, if ever we will have faith.

## **B. Diligently search the Scriptures**

Direction 2. Secondly, if we would have faith, we must diligently search the Scriptures, read the gospel, attend on the reading and preaching of the gospel for this very end, that we may get faith by it. I say for this very end, certainly, that should be our end in reading and in hearing the word, which was God's end in publishing of it; now this was His end in publishing of it. Jn. 20:21; Rom. 16:25, 26; Rom. 10:17; Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:13. This is the ordinary means appointed by God to work faith in the souls of men, as appears by Acts 2:42 and 4:4, and 11:20, 21, and many more. There are few that read and hear the word for this end, and therefore get no faith by it.

Now that the word read, and heard, may be effectual to work this precious, this most necessary grace of faith in us, there are some things antecedent, some concomitant, and some consequent upon our attendance on the word, and our use of it.

First, some things antecedent, are necessary.

(1) Preparation; for want of this the word most times proves ineffectual. It is the empty, hungry soul that relisheth and taketh in this food. Jam. 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:1; Matt. 13:22. Usually our success is according to our preparation; as in prayer, Psa. 10:17, compare 2 Chron. 12:14 with 2 Chron. 19:3. Make conscience then of preparation.

(2) Prayer; pour out your hearts to God in prayer for a blessing on the word that you read or hear. Oh, lift up a cry to God, and say, Lord, make this word effectual to work faith in my soul.

(3) Earnest desire and expectation of meeting God in the word, and of His blessing on it. If we expect nothing from it, no wonder if we receive nothing. There is a fulness of blessing in the gospel. Rom. 15:29. We should bring hungry and thirsty souls after God, the living God, as Psa. 63:1-3 and 84:1, 2. God filleth the hungry with good things. Lk. 1:53.

Secondly, some things are concomitant. As,

(1) We must read and hear it "as the word of God, and not as the word of man," 1 Thess 2:33; Acts 10:33, and we must acknowledge God's authority in it.

(2) Receive it with meekness, opening our hearts to it, and give it the most tender entertainment. Jam. 1:21.

(3) With love, readiness of mind, and gladness of heart. 2 Thess 2:10; Acts 2:41.

(4) With faith, giving credit to it, believing it to be the Word of God. Heb. 4:2.

(5) We must be careful to remember it; see what great stress is laid upon our remembering. 1 Cor. 15:2. Our salvation lies upon it. Psalms 119:11. Love the word, for love is the act of memory.

(6) Prayer must be added again for a blessing.

Thirdly, some things must be done afterward also, as,

(1) Meditation upon what you have heard and read; for want of this usually all is lost. I am persuaded this is one great reason why most profit so little by the word; because they make no conscience of meditation; they hear and read, but never think more on it afterward; so preaching, hearing, reading, and all lost; and souls, and heaven, and all lost. For God's sake, then, whose word you read and hear, and for your own soul's sake, if you are not willing they should perish for want of faith, make conscience of meditation on the word. Psalms 1:2; 119:97. If ever you get good by the word, meditate upon it.

(2) Application of it; take it home to yourselves. Job 5:27. Let it sink down into your hearts, saith Christ. It must be an ingrafted word; you must receive it into your hearts, and not into your heads only, 2 Cor. 4:6, your hearts must be jointed to it, and mixed with it.

(3) Practice; yielding up yourselves to the government of it, making it the standard and rule of your whole conversation. We must be doers of the word, and not hearers only, lest we deceive our own souls. James 1:22; 1 Peter 1:22; Matthew 7:22, 24. And in observing these Scripture rules here laid down in the careful and conscientious use of God's word after this manner, you may not doubt but the Holy Spirit of God will work with the word of God, to make it effectual to work this most precious grace of faith in us whereby to believe in God and in Christ, to the consolation and eternal salvation of our souls. But if we neglect the means God hath ordained to get faith, and for want of it die in our sins, and perish eternally, our destruction will be of ourselves.

### **C. Consider the infinite love of God**

Direction 3. Thirdly, would we have faith? Let us engage our whole souls in the deep and serious consideration of the infinite, unspeakable, inconceivable love of God the Father, in this, the highest and fullest demonstration of it, in giving His Son, His only begotten Son, to be a sin-offering, a sacrifice, a ransom for poor sinners, and that for this very end and purpose, that we poor sinners might believe in Him, and by believing, might not perish, but might have eternal life. I pray read and ponder upon the following texts, and let your most serious thoughts fix on them, and meditate on them. Isaiah 53 throughout; John 3:16, 17; Romans 8:8, 10; Proverbs 8:30; Colossians 1:12, 13; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Romans 8:3, 32, with many others, which for brevity's sake I cannot transcribe. If we can but believe this wonderful love of God the Father, in giving His dear Son to be a surety, a sin-offering, to lay all our iniquities on Him; that He was pleased to bruise Him, and put Him to grief for us; and consider and meditate upon the height and depth, the breadth and length of this immense, incomprehensible love of God, in giving His Son, and that on purpose that we might believe in Him, and by believing might have eternal life; I say, it will greatly help us to believe in His Son, to accept of this unspeakable gift, and to receive Him as He is offered to us in the gospel.

Moreover, let us also consider of, and deeply meditate upon the transcendent love of the Son of God Himself, who, though He were the delight of His Father, and lay in the bosom of His Father, even then His delights were with the sons of men, then was His heart full of love to poor sinners; and His love brought Him down from heaven to earth, to assume human nature, to take upon Him all the sins of His people, to bear them on His soul and body in the garden, there sweating great drops of blood, and on the cross, there pouring out His heart's blood, made a curse, endured the full measure of the wrath of God due for sin, and became the ransom of souls. Philippians 2:6-8; Luke 22:44; Galatians 2:20. He loved us, and gave Himself for us: "Loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood." Revelation 1:6; 1 Peter 1:18; 2:24; Galatians 3:13; Titus 2:14.

But while I am writing these things I cannot but conceive an indignation against myself, and heartily wish I were filled with shame, sorrow, and grief of spirit, that having read and heard so often of the surpassing love of God the Father, in giving His Son; and so often of the unspeakable love of Jesus, and to be no more affected with it, no more sensible of it, to have my affections no more stirred and moved, no more quickened and warmed; alas, my dead heart, my adamant heart! Lord, sprinkle it with that blood; Lord, shed abroad that love of Thine upon my heart abundantly by the Holy Ghost. Lord Jesus, manifest thy love to me, that I may love Thee. I am ashamed and pained for want of love to God, to Jesus. Oh that I could believe Thy love to my soul, then I should not choose but love Thee. Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. The consideration of this love of God, and of Christ, is a means to work faith. Try it, I pray you, you will find it so.

## **D. Apply your faith to the Gospel**

Direction 4. Fourthly, improve and act the historical faith you have on the doctrines, promises, and threatenings in the gospel, which you profess you do believe. Act the faith you have on the doctrines of the gospel, the promises of rest for your souls, pardon for your sins, life and righteousness, grace and glory, made to those that believe in Christ, and to none else. Believe and think what heaven is, that state of infinite blessedness, in the seeing and enjoying the blessed God to all eternity; believe what eternal life is, eternal glory; and believe also what hell is, separation from God. "Go ye cursed into everlasting fire"; lakes of fire and brimstone, everlasting death, the wrath of God, damnation. And seeing you profess that you believe all this, then believe also and consider it well, neither is heaven's infinite happiness to be attained, nor hell's unspeakable misery to be avoided, but only by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jn. 3:16, 17, 36; 8:24.

## **E. Seek faith diligently**

Direction 5. Fifthly, would you have faith? Then seek it diligently. Pray, O pray for it as for your lives. Cry mightily to God for it; pour out your hearts to God in prayer for it; pray continually for faith, pray without ceasing, be importunate with God for it; go all day and night panting and bleating after it. Oh that God would give me faith! Go to Jesus also for it. Cry to Him; for He is the author as well as the object of it. Heb. 12:1, 2. It is the gift of God. O pray for it.

## **F. Consider how willing God is to receive you**

Direction 6. Lastly, consider seriously, and often, how wonderful willing God is that you should believe in Christ, as you have heard; and how much He is displeased with those that will not believe in Him; and how dreadfully He hath threatened them, as Rev. 21:8. Also consider how exceeding willing Jesus Christ Himself is that poor sinners should come to Him, and believe in Him; how sweetly He calls them, how freely He offers Himself, and all He is, to them, be they never so bad, never so vile and wicked: O every one that thirsteth, Isa. 55:1, they that have no worthiness in them, nothing but sin and misery. Jn. 6:37; 7:37; Rev. 3:18; 21:11. O set your hearts to the consideration of the incomparable unparalleled love of Jesus, in dying that cursed death of the cross for sinners. Consider and meditate, hold your hearts to it, until your hearts be affected with His love, His love that passeth the love of women, love passing understanding. And consider how well He deserves and how much He challenges your love. Consider once again, what a most lovely person Jesus is, who is altogether lovely, the "brightness of his Father's glory, in whom dwells all fullness," Heb. 1:3, and in whom is all power in heaven and earth, Matt. 28:18, and labor to affect Your hearts with his most admirable excellencies, and then come unto Him weary and heavy laden with Your sins, willing to part with them all; give up your whole selves to Him, give Him Your whole hearts, and take Him for your Head and Husband, for Your only Lord and Savior; enter actually into covenant with Him, to become His, and His alone, and His forever. Thus work out your salvation and your consolation, by believing in Jesus, in blessed, all-sufficient Jesus, trusting to Him, betrusting all with Him, and God will work in you "both to will and to do." Phil. 2:12, 13. Use these means in the strength of God, and doubt not, but in the use of them, you shall obtain this precious faith; which having and acting, you shall find it to be your heart's ease in all your heart trouble.